

IDYLLS OF
THE SOUTH
BETTIE KEYES CHAMBERS



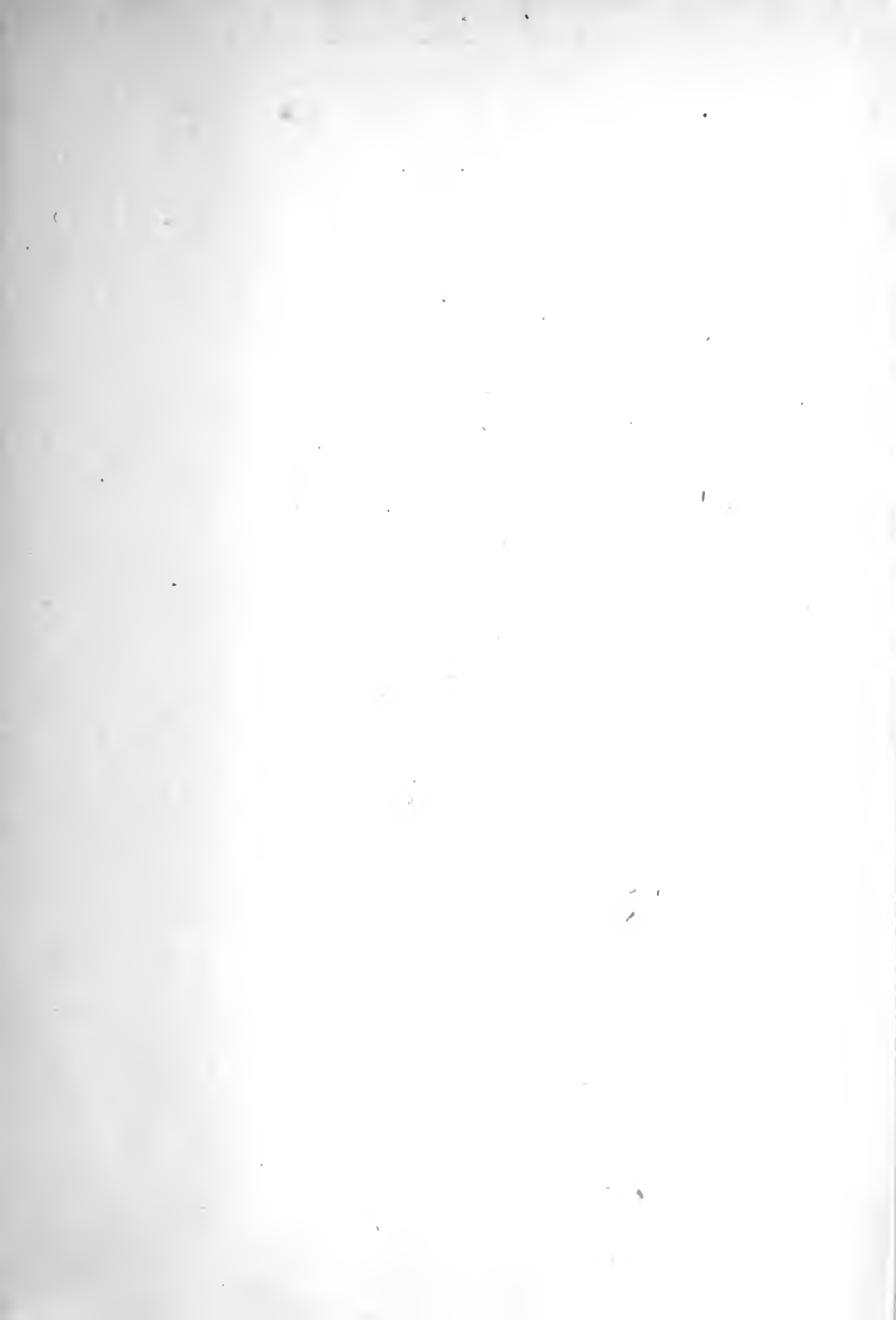


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IDYLLS OF THE SOUTH







Bettie Keyes Chambers

Frontispiece

IDYLLS OF THE SOUTH

BY
MRS. BETTIE KEYES CHAMBERS



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To the United Daughters of the Confederacy, in warm appreciation of their efforts to commemorate the heroism and patriotism of those who wore the gray in the great Civil War of America, this little poem, "Eva Landeneau," is inscribed by the

AUTHOR.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This story was begun in the closing days of the Civil War. In it I have attempted to delineate the character of the true Southern woman; and to give expression to her heart-throbs from the beginning of the war until 1878, when the terrible Yellow Fever swept over the South; and the North came with generous help to the sufferers.

I beg of those who may be tempted to read my little poem to be kind enough to *read it all before* passing judgment.—THE AUTHOR.

“ A POET’S PROEM ”

(In Spectator.)

IF on the great world’s wide and shifting sand
I scrawl my meager alphabet of song.
What profit have I, think you? Not for long
The pride of its enduring. Time’s rough hand
Sweeps all of shadowy fabric from the strand;
So children work upon the tideless shore;
So poets build their pomp. The fresh tides roar,
And desolate the glory each had planned:
Then whereof comes requital? Here and there
Our life’s horizon clouds with new regrets;
Our palaces dissolve in thinnest air;
Shimmer to dust our loftiest minarets;
Yet, childlike, work we ever on the shore,
Reap joy in building, and expect no more.

W. W.

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EVA LANDENEAU

INTRODUCTORY

THE awful fiend of civil war,—
Whose demon work was dreaded far,—
In furious wrath had been let loose
O'er Southern Land: 'Twere little use
To hope for gentle Peace again
Till pallid Woe, and Want and Pain,
And Death, should have their fearful reign
Upon the land — upon the main,

And then sprang forth the chivalry
Of Southland homes right heartily.
Fond mothers sent their cherished sons,—
And wooed and won sent dearest ones;
And sons, and husbands, fathers — all,
As true men answered Southland's call:
As true men battled for her right;
As true men died amid the fight;
Until, at length, the fearful might
Of numbers sank her cause in night.

And many a morning sun rose bright
O'er Southrons eager for the fight;
In many a dell, on many a hill,
By many a lover-haunted rill,
Whose rippling, gurgling, merry song
But made some soldier's heart more strong
As mem'ry waked her tender throng —
What tho', till then, forgotten long.

Think not they know not what they dared!
Among them some there were who shared
Our Davis' fame in Mexico;
And more than once had faced the foe.

This fight was different — well they knew;
For then a “point of honor” drew
Some to the tent. Ambition, too,
In that campaign had much to do.

I've heard some Afric travelers say,
Where winds o'er desert borders play,
The lion oft in search of prey
Long distance from his lair will stray;
And if he meet the hunters then
He'll fight them desperately; but when
He meets them near his forest den,
They well have need of hunter's ken.

'Twas thus our little Southern band
'Gainst countless numbers dared to stand
Four weary years. With scare one note
Of sympathy from Europe's throat;
And single-handed, and alone,
We fought, till e'en our boys were gone;
Till over every household fell
The gloomy shade of Azrael,—
Like that which Jewish patriarchs tell
Changed Egypt's scorning to a knell.

For fifty years — or nearly so —
Our men had tried to turn the flow
Of jealousy and envious greed
Which Northmen gave us as the meed
Of faith in field, and faith in state,
And valor, where 'tis truly great:
All vain! It proved their ruthless hate,
Like vampire's beak,—insatiate.

Think not, ye victors, in your pride,
Ye'll crush us as ye will. The tide
That flows, must ebb. We know not how
Nor when the change — we know that now

We suffer wrong. But with the free,
In future years, we yet shall be.
Perhaps 'tis Southron's destiny
To rule this land from sea to sea.

Be still, my soul! 'tis hard to sweep
My Southern lyre, and prisoned keep
Within my proud impulsive heart
Its hopes for our loved land. The smart
Of keen injustice will not let
Us what we would of wrong forget;
But while it wakens vain regret,
The gulf between digs deeper yet.

And here, O Southland Muse, be still!
We humbly bow to Heaven's will;
We yet believe our pæan song
Shall rise, like incense, rich and strong,
At last, our tears to consecrate;
And bending o'er our dead we wait
Till God shall send us kinder fate —
Or be it soon, or be it late.

Till then, O Muse; some gentler rhyme
Chant thou — Of Lovers, in that time
Which "tried men's souls," and women's faith,
As children's, by some goblin wraith;
Or snatch from dark oblivion's greed
Some story of heroic deed
Of foe or friend. To all just meed —
And thus renew some holy creed.

THE TALE

LET Fancy paint the fair domain
And quiet homestead — Inverstain.
A cottage first, 'mid live-oak trees;
This added to, by slow degrees,
As whim or comfort would suggest,—
Or as it pleased its master best;
Until at length the dwelling grew
A marvel to the stranger's view.

Red River's murky waters flow
Some forty idling miles or so
Along the east, while stretching wide
Are prairies on the westward side;
Then farther to the northward still
We find the towns of Pleasant Hill
And Mansfield, where the brave Mouton
Sealed, with his life, the victory won.

The master of quaint Inverstain,
'Twas said, had come from France or Spain
He little cared for wordly gain,
For hidden in his breast a pain
Was gnawing, yet, like Spartan youth,
He hid from all the bitter truth
That sucked life's blessing from his heart,
And held himself from all apart.

With courteous word or princely air
He turned aside the vulgar stare,
And silenced those who would have sought
Familiar intercourse of thought.
So none were rash enough, I ween,
To question what his life had been,
And thus to those without his home
He had a mystery become.

Within that home he had one child,
On whom he ever kindly smiled.
And oft his daughter's guileless play
Would win him from sad thought away.
Whatever was her wish or whim
He reck'd not what the cost to him,
But pleased her, if he could. And so
Had lived sweet Eva Landeneau,
Till Time had graced her womanhood
With all we deem most pure and good.

And now she was as fair a girl
As ever tossed a sunny curl.
Expression changing on her face
So lighted it with wondrous grace
One almost looked for angel's wing,—
And almost thought he heard one sing
Whene'er her rich voice rose and fell
In some old ballad's music swell.

It was some time in pleasant May —
I cannot tell the very day —
Two beings in the grand old wood
Of Inverstain together stood.
They were alone ; their converse low
And solemn, as of deeper flow
Than was the wont of youths and maids
Who walked amid these quiet shades.

The one, with bearing stern and grand,
Seemed born his fellows to command.
His proud, firm face bespoke a man
Whom none could find a braver than ;
But deep emotion paled his brow,
As list'ning, he bent o'er her now,
Who stood with clasped hands by his side
And downcast eyes, as if to hide

The struggle that had blanched her cheek
'Twixt soul so strong and heart so weak.

But now she slowly raised her head.
In low, brave tones she calmly said,
"Go, Ivan, Not a word of mine
Shall turn thy heart from its design.
Our country needs her sterling men
In this dark hour. Go battle, then,
And know, that where the bravest fight
My prayer shall be, 'God save the right.'"

"My Eva, thou hast spoken well,"
He said, while o'er his features fell
A light from soulful joy and pride
Of her, who was his promised bride.
She smiled and laid in his, her hand.
He clasped it, saying, "This fair land
Must win, of whose bright women thou
Art such a type. I thank thee now
For those dear words. In many an hour
They'll nerve my arm with giant power.

"This fight will be no children's play,
Nor passing wonder of a day;
But long, vindictive, fierce the strife —
A nation struggling for its life.
And when we part, — perhaps for aye, —
At least for many a weary day
Shall be our parting. So, I plead,
With brightest smiles give thy 'God-speed.'"

They turned, and slow retraced their way,
For now 'twas near the close of day.
With hearts of tender love so full,
Each sought the other's pain to lull

By cheerful smiles, although these were
But rainbows from some unshed tear;
And cheerful words — though gentlest tone
Was borrowed from a smothered groan.

They did not heed the flashing eyes,
Bespeaking anger and surprise —
The glance of jealousy and wrath,—
Of that tall horseman near their path,
Whose face now grew so fiercely weird.
It told some demon-purpose stirred,
And quickened deep within his heart,
Where plots of hate began to start.

For Conrad Neille, in bitter rage,
Had read their faces like a page
With love's quick instinct; and he now
Dismounted, and with darkening brow
And folded arms above his heart,—
As if to quell its jealous smart —
He watched them, till the gathering gloom
Enshrouded all, like pall of doom.

“Aha!” he said, “so this is why
She gave *my* suit such cold reply.
But, Ivan Vaughn, thy haughty mien
May change to one of woe and pain.
Thou woorest Eva Landeneau,
And by her fair cheek's blushing glow
And love-lit face too well I know
Her heart is thine. Ah, well, I owe
Thee many a grudge in boyhood past,—
This greatest vict'ry shall be last.

“And all these years my very soul
Bowed abject to her dear control.

In childhood's merry, careless hours
I culled for her the sweetest flowers,
Forsook the thoughtless play or mime
Oft in my boyhood's happy time,
To write for her some foolish rhyme.
And now, to see in manhood's prime

"This cherished hope take lasting flight,
My guide-star set in sudden night,
It is too much! And here I swear
There is no fate I will not dare,—
There is no doom I will not woo,—
Nor deep intrigue but I'll pursue,—
To wreak at last a vengeance dire,
And make thee, Ivan, feel the fire,
The hopeless woe, the wild unrest
Which thou hast planted in my breast."

The night-winds' soughing hollow moans
Gave mocking answer to his tones.
The wood and sky so dark had grown,
One star alone above him shone —
One star, in all the sky's wide scope.
It caught his eye. With eager hope
He set his fate, as on a die,
Upon a light cloud floating by.

He watched it floating, till at last
Both star and sky were overcast.
He sprang upon his waiting steed,
Struck deep his spurs, with madd'ned speed.
It stretched its limbs o'er wood and plain;
Then, when the sun o'er earth again
Rose bright and Conrad drew his rein,
Leagues, leagues away, lay Inverstain.

That morning's sun rose o'er the plain
Which spread so fair round Inverstain,
Upon a thousand gathered men,
Each late a quiet citizen
Who threw aside his all, and came
With heart and soul and mind aflame
With patriot fire for Southland's fame,
To win or fall for Southland's name.
And there, those men, with one acclaim
Their leader Ivan Vaughn proclaim.

From her own window o'er that lawn
Fair Eva Landeneau looked on.
She saw her lover singled out,
Heard the enthusiastic shout,
Then murmured softly, "It is just.
A truer man ne'er held their trust.
Yet Heaven pity all who must
On battle-field sink down in dust.

"Oh, Father, whether foe or friend,
Thy mercy to the dying send.
But, Father, hear a maiden's prayer,
And shield my Ivan with thy care.
Yet if dear Southland's bitter need,
In death demands his heart shall bleed,
Give to my soul Thy strength with speed.
And faith like Abraham's I plead."

Long Eva knelt in silent prayer,
And when she rose a glory rare
And holy o'er her features glowed,
And bright within her dark eyes showed —
A vestal priestess at the shrine
Of Southland. She could now resign
Her more than life, and say, "Not mine,
Oh, Father; not my will, but Thine."

Days lengthened into weeks, and then
An "order" came for Ivan's men
To hasten to Virginia, and
The Northern foe help to withstand.
And Eva with her father stood
To watch them marching thro' the wood —
The old man with uncovered head,
She giving smiles, of tears instead.

They bore the pennon she had given
With her own hands; its stars were woven,
And Eva knew they'd guard it well
'Mid rain of shot or burst of shell.
But when the little band was gone,
Those silver stars their last had shone
For her full eyes,— she felt that lone,
Deep sadness through her being borne
We all must know when standing near
The grave of those we hold most dear.

The days passed on, and many a plain
Reeked red with blood of Northern slain;
But ere the wild, inglorious rout,
Or ere the loud victorious shout,
Oh, many a rebel soldier fell!
And Southern hearts were stilled as well,
Whose death-cold brow with hero-wreath
We twine, as now their swords we sheath.

More dear than famed Excalibur
Those swords to us; more potent far
To nerve the hearts of Southern youth
For deeds of valor, right, and truth,
Tho' rusting in their silent sheath
Or lost amid some o'er grown heath
From hands that flashed them — underneath
The green sod now. Aye, we bequeath

The honor of our hero dead
Who fought for Southern rights, and bled
On sea or battlefield — and *lost*
The *cause* for which a holocaust
They there became, to children who
We know will to the trust be true:
And if they must the fight renew,
Who dare to say what they will do!

The war raged on. The changing years
Brought Eva oft new cause for tears.
Her sweet face pale and saddened grew,
Her dark eyes took a darker hue;
And when she bowed her fair young head
O'er "list of wounded, missing, dead,"
With bated breath and fearful dread
And wild suspense she o'er them read.

Then when she found not one dear name,
Some respite to her bosom came;
And spreading o'er her gentle face
The brooding care to peace gave place.
Of gallant deeds of Ivan Vaughn
She sometimes read; then, bright her wan
Sweet features lighted. "Nobly done!"
She said was but his just guerdon.

The iron boats our waters swept,
And many a missive thus was kept,
Which Ivan Vaughn had, thoughtful, sent
From field or camp or battlement,
And then our proud Queen City fell.
Thy fall, Oh, Vicksburg, was our knell!
And every shot and crashing shell
That struck thee, crushed our hearts as well.

'Tis hard to stifle vengeful ire;
'Tis hard to smother rebel fire.
Thy capture sends the hot blood yet
Swift coursing; nor can we forget
The visions, scarcely dimmed till then,
Of what our future might have been,
That passed from us like sunlight when
Eclipse, or dungeons close o'er men.

Now Inverstain was oft the home
Of soldiers who had westward come
To seek again the strength they lost
When, camping mid the snows and frost;
Or, fever-weakened in some tent
Or hospital, were homeward sent,
That care on them, which would be spent
To others helpless, could be lent.

And Eva gave these kindly thought,
To comfort and relieve; and sought,
With womanly and winning ways,
To make less long the dreary days
Of pain and fever; and she oft
Would read God's Word. So low and soft
Her gentle voice, its melody
Would soothe them, like a lullaby.

Sometimes Death's shadow hovered there;
And then her earnest, pleading prayer
Swift rising to the Father's throne,
Flung wide unto the dying one
The gates of faith. When the surcease
Of pain told of the soul's release,—
The latest breath ere life would cease
Bore Eva's name to realms of peace.

The Summer let her mantle fall;
The Autumn, for hers, gathered all
The richest hues the rainbow wears,
Rejecting but its falling tears;
Then Indian Summer's hazy glow
Gave place to Winter's ice and snow —
And all this while no cheering word
From Ivan. Eva's bosom stirred;
Her life's fair page, so darkly blurred,
Showed impress of wild rumors heard.

Yet through this weary time think not
That Ivan Vaughn was e'er forgot,
For Eva's thoughts at morn were given
To him; her latest sigh at even.
Yet ne'er a murmuring word she said
These gloomy years, so slowly sped.
But patiently she bowed her head
Like Jephthah's child to Mizpah led.

One bright Spring morn a soldier came —
She did not know, nor ask his name.
He told her he had "left the ranks,
And had been serving under Banks."
"A Yankee, and deserter too!"
Quick thro' her mind this verdict flew;
But 'twas unspoke, the ghastly hue
Of his worn face her pity drew.

And there was something in his face
Which held her spellbound; and to trace
What 'twas, unconscious she began
His form and features both to scan.
'Twas like a glimpse of mountain streams
So distant, that it only seems
We hear them; like those wakeful gleams
Of that strange life we live in dreams.

He sat down on the step beside
Her feet, and said, "Ah, had I died,
And had not seen thee, lady, then
My life's work had unfinished been.
I've sought your father, far and near,
For many a day — aye, many a year;
And but for this mad war I fear
I ne'er had bent my footsteps here.

"And now I've scarcely time to say
Half that I must, ere Death shall lay
His seal upon my lips. E'en now ——"
"Ha, Allonais! whence comest thou?"
Fierce broke these words from Landeneau,
Now hurrying forth. "My hidden woe
Com'st thou to mock — the long ago
I would my child should never know?"

But Eva sprang quick to his side,
Caught his uplifted arm and cried:
"Oh, father! in this anger wild
Deny not thou thy pleading child.
The man is dying. Let him rest
Beneath our roof. Within thy breast
Keep what thou wilt. As thy behest
Shall be thy wish, I make no quest."

And Landeneau looked on the face
Upturned to his. Its tender grace
Subdued his wrath; he drew her head
Close to his bosom, while he said:
"My child, my child, I would for aye
Shield thee from knowledge which may prey
Upon thy peace — to ashen gray
Change all thy sky in life's young day.

"Now thou must know. For who can say
Why this man sought our home to-day?"
The stranger spoke: "Wilt thou not hear
Words which this mystery will clear?"
But as he spoke a crimson tide
Flowed from his lips; and Eva tried
To staunch it. When the life-blood red
And bright had ceased, she placed his head
Upon her lap — with nameless dread
She whispered, "Father, is he dead?"

Her father started. Like a stone
Till then he stood, or more like one
Who had been walking in his sleep,
And wakened suddenly. A deep-
Drawn sigh he breathed, then said, "No, no!
Twice I have seen his life blood flow.—
He is not dead. But he must go
Within. Come hither, men, what ho!"

His servants hastened to obey
Their master's bidding. And when they
Had borne the stranger in, and laid
Him down, and constant efforts made
To bring life back again, he breathed;
While child-like smiles his pale lips wreathed,
As if of every thought relieved
That had his heart or other's grieved.

He breathed again; but clouded o'er
His mind; he saw the stains of gore
On Eva's hands and dress. He sprang
Upon his feet. The cry that rang
Throughout the house, through dale and wood
Far echoed, and chilled Eva's blood:
Till now, she by his side had stood,
And sought to soothe him as she could.

He sank exhausted down, and moaned
While Landeneau in anguish groaned.
Quick Eva turned, fled to her room;
Her brain seemed reeling thro' the gloom
Of twilight. On the soft still air
Thence rose to God her earnest prayer:
"Thou in whose hands all creatures are,
Bend low to me, give me thy care."

She changed her dress, bathed hands and face,
Removing every bloody trace,
And then with noiseless step she sought
The chamber whence she fled. She thought
It held some skeleton of fear
Whose shadow had been hovering near
Unheeded o'er her many a year —
And now — "why should its form appear?"

She reached the threshold. Allonais
In quiet sleep before her lay.
The lamplight fell across his face,
And startled her; for she could trace
Those features' likeness to her own —
Tho' pale and thin they now had grown.
She turned the light away — and torn
With fears, for what must yet be borne.

She softly left the room. Eftsoon
She saw the white light of the moon
Break thro' a rifted cloud, and fall
As though in blessing over all.
Then saw her father with fixed gaze,
Still turned where sunset embers' blaze
Had flamed and paled, to pierce the maze
(If that could be) of future days.

She stood a moment, then went near,—
She ne'er had held him half so dear.
With pain, she marked upon his brow
The trace of care grown deeper now.
He turned to her — sat down and said:
“Come hither. Though the time has fled
For childlike faith,—ill has sped
The day when storms break overhead.”

She knelt beside him; on his breast
Laid her young head in perfect rest.
She thought of all his tenderness;
To others, hard; but gentleness
Itself he ever was to her.
What tho' some mem'ry now should stir
From out its grave — some darksome blur
Upon his soul. 'Twas hid from her

In love and pity. Should it quit
Its grave, let God in judgment sit.
While thus she thought, a calmness stole
Within her breast and soothed her soul.
One soft hand gently pressed his head,
Stroked his white beard, while low she said:
“Dear father, let whatever come,
Thy child's full faith has here its home.
What tho' the storm-clouds burst above,
The fragments flash back God's great love,
And peace thereafter, like a dove,
Rests in the heart where passions strove.”

Her words fell, like the lotus balm,
Upon his heart; it grew more calm.
More strong his purpose to effect —
To let her read the retrospect
Of one sad time: 'Twere best that she
Should learn from him this mystery;

Nor wait until some enemy
Again should wake it suddenly.

“Go, Eva, see yon suffering man
Shall lack for naught. His little span
Of life, I think, is nearly gone,”
He said. “Let all that may, be done
To ease or cure him; let it be
No want of any courtesy
That he shall die. So, do thou see
He has good care. Then come to me.”

“He’s well attended. Conrad Neille —
Who came to-day — and kind Emile
De Velas, and the Surgeon, too,
Are with him now. What they can do
To comfort him, they will; then let
No thought of him thy feelings fret.
I would this man thou couldst forget,
His coming brings thee such regret.”

He answered not her words, but spoke
As if half-conscious that he broke
The still night air: “As fair as thou
Thy mother wast, my child. Her brow
As pure as thine, her voice as sweet;
Her heart as glad, as light her feet,
To bring me joy. And yet so fleet
To bring me woe; and him to meet.

“Long arid years have gone since then;
And weary was their passing when
I sought some respite to my grief —
The aftermath of bliss so brief —
In this far land. Forgetfulness
I knew would ne’er my spirit bless.

But here I hoped my watchfulness
Would shield thee from this wretchedness:

“’Twas vain! And now has come the time
When thou must know thy father’s crime.
I am no craven, Eva, yet
The task which Fate and I have set
For me this night, I find to be
Most hard indeed. I ask from thee
No verdict kind; but tenderly
Keep thou thy mother’s memory.”

The old man put her back from him
And went amid the shadows dim;
Walked back and forth; returned anon,
Then turned again, and still walked on,
As if to gather full control
O’er voice and heart and surging soul.
And when he spoke again there stole
A quiet sadness through the whole.

“Hast thou no dream of brighter skies,
Blue-mirrored o’er thine infant eyes?
Of mountains rising from the sea,
Whose feet the waves wash constantly?
Whose brows the sun’s first arrows caught
On visors which the ice-king wrought,
Of off’rings that each snowstorm brought,
Through ages passing human thought?

“Hast thou no dream of shadowy vales
Between these; nor of fairy tales
Heard there, that waked thy faith in lore
Of magic? — urging thee explore
Each crag and cave, and dark abyss,
For fairy elves in mystic bliss,
Until we feared some search like this
Would make thee brave the sea-foam’s kiss?”

“ True, father, I have sat sometimes
Forgetful midst my childhood’s mimes.
A flitting cloud, a bird, a tone,
Half roused some feeling past and gone.
I missed in mem’ry’s chain some link,
And shut my eyes and tried to think,
If spirits stand upon the brink
Of other life — then backward shrink.

“ I’ve had — wast memories? — like these,—
Of sunny skies, and wind-tossed seas;
Of deep, dark caves, whose walls of stones
Forever echo murmuring tones;
Of mountains, and of mountain streams,
’Till thought grew weary. Now, it seems,
There surely were some truthful gleams
Of former being midst these dreams.

“ And, then, my heart has yearned to know
Why should these fancies come and go?
But, father, save ’tis best for thee,
Let this sad tale unspoken be.”

“ Nay, but it must. Those mountains lay,
Down sloping, to a lovely bay
Where sunshine with the shadows play,
O’er white-crest waves, the live-long day.

“ Four happy years, a glad, bright life
I dwelt there, with my child-like wife;
Four happy years,— so short, so sweet,
So full of every joy complete,—
I envied not the king, his throne;
The sage his wisdom. And my own
Fair lot would have exchanged with none
When thou didst come. ’Twas all undone!

“My Eva suddenly become,
So grave, so different — that some
Deep feeling moved her, well I knew.
Still I believed my wife was true
To me as steel. Her cheeks bright glow
I saw would often paler grow,
Then flush, as if some undertow
Within her heart would ebb and flow.

“What could it be? was all my thought,
That to her bosom trouble brought?
And so I racked my throbbing brain
To bring her spirit joy again.
Myself alone I yet would blame,
For still she was to me the same
Dear loving wife. One day I came
To give her sweet surprise. Her name

“I heard a stranger call, and I
Saw my own wife, in answer fly
To meet him; saw him clasp her form
In fond embrace, while kisses warm
He pressed upon her glowing cheek.
I stood like stone; I could not speak,
For heart, and brain, and limbs grew weak —
Till roused, a dire revenge to wreak.

“I strove to think; — could only feel
A dumb, dead pain my blood congeal.
The ecstasy of wretchedness
Had filled me with such bitterness
I left them there. I stole away
As felons creep from light of day, —
My soul a hell, my heart a flame.
The tortures of the lost are tame
To this. I watched, till thrice he came, —
But why prolong this tale of shame?

"I watched, with guarded tongue and gaze
Unpitying, three fearful days.
The evening of the third I saw
My wife some hidden package draw
From out its place; and when she gave
It him, she bade him haste to save
Himself. What was the warning drive
Her thus to fear his yawning grave?

"Ha! should he dare my wrath evade?
A moment more, my keen-edged blade
Flashed from its sheath; but — *'twas my wife,*
Flung 'twixt us, who received the knife.
Oh, God! It was a maddening sight
That seared my throbbing brain. The flight
Of years has brought me small respite
From woe begun that fearful night.

"I caught her, snatched my poinard and
Struck at my foe. Perhaps my hand
Unsteady in my horror grew.
I saw him fall, and never knew
Till now that he lived on; but I
Bore Eva to her room; and by
The anxious fear within her eye,
While earnestly she bade me fly

"With thee; bade me believe her true
As heaven to me; the cold death-dew
Upon her brow, I knew that I
Must lay my darling down to die.
'Haste thou to leave this land,' she said;
'A price, e'en now, is on thy head.
Fly for my sake — our babe's. I dread
Lest thou too long ——' She gasped — *was dead.*"

A long deep silence 'twixt them fell,
As if they listened to the knell
Re-echoing from vanished years,
Too strangely sad for grateful tears.
Anon, the leaves above them stirred,
And soon the voice of mocking-bird
Poured forth such peace as never heard
In human song, or human word.

Too soon the minstrel spread its wing
'Mid other scenes and groves to sing;—
But never listeners blest its lay
With half the fervor as did they,
For to their spirits, over-wrought
By suffering, that song had brought
A quiet hopefulness full-fraught
With strength, far more than stoics taught.

Then Eva in a cheerful tone
Said, "Father, what is past, is gone
Forever from our wish or will;
And though we feel the traces still,
Of scathing pain, or scorching woe,
As memory will backward flow,—
It is not well that we forego
What yet of joy our hearts may know.

"The Lethe of the olden time
From youth or age or manhood's prime
Took only that which could but grieve,
And ever still, would to them leave
The thought of joy each season bore,—
The brightness which each heaven wore,—
The afterglow that sometimes more
Is prized than sunshine gone before.

“I count those lives as spent in vain
In which are clouds sought after rain.
I'd write — ‘*Implora place*’ on
Whatever cannot be undone;
And strive — mayhap with graver mien
To walk with firm sure tread again,
Until I reach the open plain
Where we may peace eternal gain.

“Hast thou not seen our prairies wide,
When after raging fire has tried,
How black beneath the bright blue sky,
Seared, withered, desolate they lie?
But days pass by, on silent wing,
And rain and wind their healing bring.
Lo! soon the grass and flowers spring,
And beauty o'er the landscape fling.”

Her father bent his head to speak,
And tear-drops glistened on his cheek
And fell upon the daughter's face
As he gave back her fond embrace.
She knew, then, that her words had given
To him that peace which he had striven
To gain so long. The rock was riven;
And from his breast despair was driven.

Then Eva pointed to the glare
Which gleamed from open casement where
The lamplight 'scaped dispelling gloom
'Twixt them and yonder sick man's room.
A faint uncertain ray of light,
As if 'twere struggling into sight,
And gathering steadiness and might
To force a pathway through the night.

“ See, father, how that single ray
Despite the darkness finds its way
Until about our feet it fall.
And thus thy child may, after all,
The glim’ring light for thee have caught
Which cruel fate withheld thy thought,
And which these weary years had brought
That respite thou hast vainly sought.

“ Come, father, there is Conrad Neille
Now seeking us. I own, I feel,
All eager for a presence — more
Than ever felt for one before.”
She turned to Conrad quickly; and
Upon his arm she laid her hand,—
Impatient said: “ Why dost thou stand
Like one awaiting some command?

“ How is the stranger? Does he well?”
Her tone was softer, as it fell
Upon his ear, and Conrad knew
By its full pathos that some true
And earnest feeling moved her; — deeps
He could not sound such spirit keeps.
And so, he answered, “ Yes, he sleeps,
Murmurs thy name, anon he weeps.”

“ Then lead me to him, for I trust
Bright hopes to realize. I must
Be near him as he wakens. Then
As consciousness returns, and when
His eyes rest on my face, he’ll say
The words he fain had spoke to-day,—
And after that a seal we’ll lay
Upon those sad events for aye.”

Here let us leave them. Allonais
Had gained his consciousness, and they
Heard him the long-ago explain,
When lack of faith brought crime and pain,—
Knew the deep wrong which ne'er could be
Undone throughout Eternity,
To the fond wife who carefully
Screened out-lawed brother secretly.

That when 'twas known her husband's name
Should bear no tittle of the blame
Of hiding from their Majesties
The enemy of dynasties,—
Oh, woman's heart, so strong to bear
Whatever wrong, or woe, or care
Falls to thy loved one's lives.— Yet rare
These crucifixions valued are.

But Conrad left them at the door,
For 'neath the trees he had seen more
Than Eva or her father did.
There, by dim shadows almost hid,
A man approaching, bending low;
Each step made painfully and slow
On crutches, and seemed thus to go,
With mind and body full of woe.

The moon had sunken low, and now
Emerged from clouds, and o'er the brow
Of that bowed man flung weird-like gleam,—
Pale, faint, uncertain. "Do I dream,"
Thought Conrad, "or do I look on
The changed frame of Ivan Vaughn?
Or was this but a shadow, wan,
Which came with feeling long ago?"

He had seen Ivan, when the fight
Of one fierce battle closed with night,
Dead on the field; wide staring eyes,
Upturned to cold, unpitying skies,
While from the wounds the clotted gore,
Stagnant and chill, could run no more;
The livid face, so proud of yore,
He marked had only blankness wore.

“ Could one from such a death awake,
And once again life overtake?
No! No! The shot which laid him low
Meant but to wound — yet well I know
'Twas aimed too surely. Could I tell
'Twould do its mission half so well?
But why such thoughts within me dwell?
Have I weak qualms, at last, to quell? ”

“ Begone, such fancies! 'Tis too late,
E'en if I would, to strive with fate.”
Thus thinking, with impatient stride
He soon stood by the stranger's side.
“ Come, friend,” said he, “ art thou in quest
Of food, and shelter, and sweet rest?
If so, be yonder mansion's guest,
It welcomes Southrons, with warm zest.”

'Twas well the shadows of the night
Hid that stern face from Conrad's sight;
But as it was, nor word, nor tone,
Betrayed the voice was Ivan's own.
He said, “ To strangers — even me —
Is welcome, sometimes, charity.
I must decline thy courtesy,
And yet I do so gratefully.

“ Both food and rest are waiting me,
Whene’er I choose; ’twould therefore be
Ungen’rous ’vantage of thy thought,
To use thy kindness, e’en unsought.
I’ve wandered, mayhap, aimlessly,
To this fair grove, and thoughtlessly
O’rheard some voices, which, maybe,
Were those of guests we yonder see.”

“ Nay, not of guests,” said Conrad. “ There
A father and his daughter were
Conversing earnestly to-night.
Thou hear’st their voices? Am I right?
To them this home, these grounds, belong.
But though they’ve lived here for so long
And won attachments deep and strong —
Suspensions rise of some great wrong:

“ What didst thou hear? Wilt thou not say?
If so, I’ll for thy trouble pay
What sum thou wilt. This mystery
I fain would solve. ’Twill ever be
An insulating, vexing wall,
That rears, impassably, to all
Who seek their friendship. You may call
It pride or folly, after all.

“ It is the same. Into this walk
They came, and were engaged in talk
For hours, that had an earnest tone.
I saw them, while the moonlight shone,
But when the darkness shadows threw,
The hours interminable grew.
At last, impatient, near I drew
But only to be vexed anew.

“Thy pardon, stranger, but this much
I had to tell, though mayhap such
A gossip suiteth not thy mood;
But thou canst make it fetch thee good. .
Thou’st heard that which I vainly sought
To know; tell what thine ears have caught;
It may with meaning deep be fraught
To me, although to others naught.”

“Not now! Not now! See where the light
Streams from yon window, calm and bright,
There is some stir. Methinks there came
A cry from thence. Hark! ’Tis thy name
We hear.” But Conrad Nielle was gone
Ere the last word: And now alone
Stood Ivan Vaughn. In bitter tone
He hissed: “*Forgot!* For such an one!

“A would-be felon, who would steal
The thoughts we choose not to reveal.
Oh, Eva! Eva! Can this be
Thy payment of my love for thee?
I *will not* yet believe the tale
They told to me. Shall words avail
To deaden faith?—thy truth assail?—
And falsehood with my soul prevail?

“Falsehood, said I? And yet Emile
Was well convinced, ere he could feel
Suspicion’s anger; others, too—
My friends for years, both staunch and true,
Who ne’er would use an idle jest
As earnest of their friendship’s zest?
Nor yet repeat such gossip lest
They knew,—their silence were not best.

"To-night I heard her low, sweet voice
Vibrate, as it has made rejoice
My inmost soul. And oh! too well
I know the gentle, minor swell
Arises but from tender strings
Which have no selfish quiverings.
I saw — But why recount these things
And sharpen disappointment's stings?

"Soon, soon the heralds of the dawn
Will light this grove and lovely lawn.
And I would once more see her face,
Or ere again I take my place
On battle-field. Its mem'ry will
Steal o'er my heart like sunlight till
Eolian symphonies will thrill,
Which, Memnon-like, time cannot still."

He ceased and slowly turned away
Just as the amber light of day
Streamed far up in the eastern sky.
He turned away, without a sigh
To tell of loneliness intense,
So deep, it numbed his every sense.
He reached his horse, bestrade it, thence
He slowly rode, and cared not whence:

The days crept on; and once again
He stood upon the battle-plain.
Thin were the ranks, and scanty then,
For death had claimed so many men.
There were strange rumors in the air,
Of doubt and woe, and grim despair,
Of how the South drooped everywhere,—
Nor burden of such odds could bear.

What boots this now? The end grew near.
Surrender! Did he rightly hear
The fearful whisper? Each strong heart
Grew still, then quivered with the smart
Of that dull pain which scorns all art
Of human cunning to impart
To ear or parchment,—felt the dart
Must be, or ere the knowledge start.

And Ivan, better schooled for it
By his own past, strove to submit,
As brave men should. Hid his own pain,
That thus he better might sustain
The shaken fortitude of those
Who ne'er had blenched in front of foe; —
Who firmly bore war's grimmest woes,
But needed strength for this sad close.

Strength for the turning to each home,
That had all desolate become;
Strength, each, for meeting with his wife
And loved ones, after this long strife;
For picking up each broken thread
Of life, 'mid hopes forever fled;
For soothing each bowed, aching head
That bent in anguish o'er the dead.

“Take courage, friends,” he said. “I know
How much we need it, for this blow.
He is a braver man, who bears
It stoutly, than the one who wears
The scars from well-fought battle-field;
Or he who ‘sleeps upon his shield.’
For greater they, their souls, who wield
That dearer than this life to yield.”

Their hearts grew firm, though each stern face
Of that fierce struggle bore the trace.
When came the order "Arms to stack,"
They did so calmly, turning back,
As we, when by a friend we stand
The "*last, last time.*" And once a band
Played, "Take Me Home to Southern Land,"
And tears were dashed by strong men's hand.

We could not ope the folded leaf
Whereon is writ these scenes of grief,
Which rack the soul and pale the brow —
With feeling less than holy now.
But we would some dear mem'ry save,
As when we take one treasured wave
Of hair from those with tears we lave,
And leave the rest unto the grave.

The soldiers grasped each other's hand,
Then scattered through the Southern Land,
Nor could they well repress the sigh
In that eternal sad "good-bye."
But ah! how little could they guess
Their South should know such wretchedness
As demagogues strove hard to press
On her proud spirit, in distress.

Thank God! those bitter days are past,
And we have brighter hopes at last.
A fever came, and ope'd the door
For kinder thoughts than went before.
The great hearts of the people rose
And thrilled once more with human throes,—
Forgot we had been former foes,
And sought to soothe some weary woes.

But let us turn our thoughts again
To those who dwelt at Inverstain.
Sweet Eva knew that Ivan Vaughn
"Surrendered." But where he had gone?
She did not know. Why, from her side
He lingered, when war's stranded tide
Had left them freedom to decide
When she should be his happy bride.

Near Inverstain his homestead lay,
His tenants said, "He came one day
And walked about, as if in sleep
Or stricken by some sorrow deep;
At times a letter he had read,
Then silent sat, with bended head,
Till long, sad hours had slowly sped,
As if his aims in life were fled."

He went away; but whither none
Could tell. They thought that he had gone
To foreign lands; he'd bade them stay,—
He "might return some future day."
These simple folk loved Eva, who
Was kind to them; and now they knew
Something was wrong between these two,
Which they were anxious to undo.

She questioned none. A dull, cold pain
Was sorely pressing heart and brain.
"He has been near," she said, "nor sought
My presence. What such change has wrought
In him, who was the best of men?"
And there were weary moments when
As if some weird energumen
Had stupefied her reason then.

Thus days, and months, and years rolled on
Without a word from Ivan Vaughn,
And Conrad Neille had sought again
The hand of Eva — still in vain;
Yet she was kind, for when there came
A time when well-deservéd shame
O'ertook and blighted Conrad's name
She gave him neither scorn nor blame.

She never asked if suffering were
The cause of guilt or wrong. For her
It was enough misfortune fell,
To make her heart with pity swell.
Her own life was so lone and sad —
Such sorrow and such shadow had —
She would have made all others glad,
Believing few were truly bad.

Beyond the Mississippi's waves,
Where tide of Pacagoula laves
With fickle coquetry's caress
The sands, which soft winds lightly press,
Emile and Ivan watch the flow
Of white-capped breakers 'neath the glow
Of sunset sheen, nor little know
The same thoughts through each bosom go.

Time sets his signet unawares:
Their faces held the trace of cares.
They had together traveled far,
For sweet contentment, since the war,—
And found in lands beyond the seas
Ubiquitous — earth's miseries.
And now the water's symphonies
Brought to each heart dear memories.

At length Emile De Velas holds
A letter, and its page unfolds.
“My friend,” he said, “if I discern
This meaning rightly, ’twill concern
Thee somewhat. Listen: ‘Is it vain
Request that thou to Inverstain
Wilt come without delay? I fain
Would see thee — ere too late — again.”

“Oh, friend!” said Ivan, while his breath
Came quick and hard.—“Can it be death
Is near my darling? Hasten thou.
It may be ‘too late’ ! even now ——
But no ! I’ve heard a rumor grim,
That Conrad sees the daylight dim
Thro’ grated bars. I own the whim,
To hide from thee this guilt of him.”

“Her husband’s guilt ! Thou canst not know
How bitter to my soul this blow.
It may be for his sake, she writes,
And thy kind presence thus invites.
If this be true, give careful heed,
Both influence and gold he’ll need
Ere his acquittal be decreed.
Use what I have, and that with speed :

“No protest, friend. If it gave peace
To her dear heart, gain his release,
Nor tell her whence thine aid. Perhaps
When years to age shall have their lapse,
Some thought of me within her mind
Shall rise as soft and half-defined
As perfume floating on the wind,
And make some memory sweet and kind.”

They parted then, as friends oft part,
With vague forebodings in each heart —
A subtle sadness creeping through
The kindly words of man's adieu.
Though soon they hoped to meet again,
Each felt the hope was almost vain;
As if the words from Inverstain
Cast silhouettes o'er either brain.

Long Ivan listened to the moan
Of breaking waves when left alone.
We all have had that feeling strange,
Which warns us of some coming change
For good or ill. 'Tis Heaven sent —
We call it a presentiment,—
As if we suddenly are lent
A prophet's glimpse of some event.

Oh! happy those who at such times,—
E'en though their souls be seared with crimes,—
Will to our God their troubles take,
And pray for help for Jesus' sake.
But in these days of unbelief
Few, few will seek this sure relief.
And Ivan silent bore his grief
With this deep comfort —“Life is brief.”

Emile De Velas once more stood
Beneath the shadows of the wood
Of Inverstain. The sun was low,
Its last, bright arrows burnished glow,
Flashed golden splendor where they fell
On leaf or lawn; and then the spell
Of song rose soft, with mournful swell,
As from some stricken peri's cell.

Emile walked slowly, till he saw
Through open casement, with some awe,
Old Inverstain's proud master lay
Athwart his couch. A little way
From him was Eva; o'er her head
The sunset radiance brightly spread,
And mingling with each waving thread
A glowing halo round it spread.

"Sing, daughter, what is in thy heart,
For soothing is sweet music's art.
Sing what thou wilt, nor hesitate
And cheerful spirits reinstate,"
Said Landeneau, with pathos deep
For she had hushed her song to weep.
Now o'er the strings her fingers sweep,
And soon her voice rose full and deep.

"Oh, Harp of Poesy once more
With trembling touch I sweep thy strings!
And bid thee o'er my spirit pour
A flood of song from Lethean springs.
I must have respite from the pain
I've tried so long in vain to quell.
Then oh, my harp! send forth a strain
Whence only tender memories dwell.

"Send forth for me some quick'ning thrill,
To melt the frozen fount of tears;
That I may bid my heart be still
And bear the burden of these years; —
In whose slow flight grief's weary pain
Has mocked the loving trust of youth.
Perhaps, through thee, o'er me again
Shall fall the blessed hope of truth.

“ For once within this heart of mine,
E'er o'er it swept woe's lightning scathe,
There rose to love and truth a shrine,
Its consecrated priestess Faith;
But dark and cold that shrine so fair —
The holy fire has faded out,
Which burned upon the altar where
Now crusted lies the grime of doubt.

“ It is thy soothing notes alone
Can thrill me with a joyful ray;
Perhaps thy power can roll the stone
From Faith's deep grave at last away.
Then let thy swelling tones, my lyre,
Awake from death-like silentness,
Relight again the altar fire,
And lull my soul to quietness.”

The notes died tremblingly away,
As twilight told the death of day.
The echoes in their soft reply
Were like a spirit's answ'ring sigh,—
So low, so sweetly, strangely sad
Such strains of sympathy each had,
If heard too long 'twould move the glad
With anguish deep, till almost mad.

Emile would have these echoes broke,
But stood spellbound till Eva spoke.
“ I cannot sing a happy song,
This burden has been borne too long.
Slow-dropping wears the hardest rock
More surely than the sudden shock;
And quicksands that most firmly lock,
Their presence, with smooth waters mock.

"I never turned my face away
From sorrow; but have tried alway
To comfort give. Then why must I
Thus suffer on — yet cannot die?
Have I some duty yet to fill?
Ah, well! I'd tread life's grinding mill,
Where peace and hope are crushed, until
The end — if 'twere for Southland still.

"Ah, murmuring heart! Once more I'll sing,
Dear father, for thy comforting,
And then forgive me, if I lay
My harp in silentness away.
Unconscious oft I wake a strain
Which resurrects the thronging train
Of joys, air-castles — hopes as vain; —
My o'er-pent soul then writhes in pain."

No answer came from Landeneau.
His thin hand hid his eyes; bent low
His daughter's head. De Velas came
Close to their side, spoke Eva's name.
Quick to her feet in sweet surprise
She rose. The twilight's soft disguise
Veiled not the starlight from her eyes,
That welcomed ere her voice replies:

"Oh, friend, dear friend! All words are vain
To speak my thanks that you again
Came at our call, and came at once.
It was a generous response.
My father, being ill of late,
To see you was importunate;
Until the wish became so great
It seemed new fever to create."

She clasped his hand between her own,
Which more than words has ever shown
The heart's deep thrill. The lights were brought,
He saw her features overfraught
With earnestness, and then she led
Him gently to her father's bed,—
Knelt softly, kissed that still, white head,—
Started in shuddering fear —“ Dead! dead? ”

She cried, “ No, no! He could not go
From life and leave me to such woe!
Speak, father, once more to thy child!
But hush! hush! surely I am wild.
We'll wait, Emile, and quiet keep.
There, shade the lamp. We'll watch his sleep.
Hist! Is not that his breathing deep?
He'll wake anon. Ha! dost thou weep?

“ Would God I could. But burning eyes
Dry up sweet tears ere they arise.
When simoons sweep 'neath Eastern skies
A parched waste behind them lies: —
Thus my poor brain. And what I am —
Have been — may be — life's cruel sham
Throughout 'tis all.” Her face grew calm,
As if she drank of lotus-balm.

She laid her head upon the breast
So still in death's eternal rest,
As she had often done. The sweep
Of years rushed by — she fell asleep.
The numbing brain, where melted lead
Seemed coursing through — all thought instead —
Could not retain its broken thread
As yet, and know her father dead.

Friends gathered there. They watched the sleep
Of both — unlike, yet like. So deep,
So passing calm, but for the trace
Of shadowed care on Eva's face.
They could have thought she too were gone
From life with all its trials done.
And that strange scene of death not one
Could look with tearless eyes upon.

“Disturb her not,” the doctor said,
“Or life indeed may then be sped.”
And three long hours they watched. Each sense
Grew keen, in silence so intense;
For not a whispered word was spoke,
And not the slightest movement broke
The stillness, lest they should invoke
The end they feared — ere Eya woke.

Emile stood from the rest apart,
With tear-dimmed eyes and aching heart;
Anon, his mind afar was gone,
In sympathy with Ivan Vaughn,
Whose every aim in life, he knew,
From some sweet thought of Eva grew; —
E'en his own presence here was due,
To hopes for these divided two.

Again he looked at Eva's face,
So sweetly sad, in mournful grace.
Would Ivan Vaughn were here. His eyes
Could see her truth. “How still she lies!”
He spoke unconscious, wondering lest
If, after all, it were not best
This child should gain eternal rest
Upon her father's cold dead breast.

But while he gazed upon her thus
A vision came — which none of us
Can well explain, till life is o'er.
Her face grew calmer than before,
The room spread out in one wide hall,
With rows of couches; each and all
Held dead and dying, while the wall
Loomed white and bare beyond.— A pall

Strange, weird, and dark was settling still
Upon his soul, despite his will.
He bent to look upon the face
Of Landeneau, but in its place
He surely saw — still, rigid, wan —
The death-stamped face of Ivan Vaughn; —
And Eva's head his breast upon.
One instant, then, the vision's gone.

Emile came near her, trembling yet,
To see she lived. His eyes were wet
With strong emotion. Opening wide
Her large dry eyes, she mutely tried
To waken (so it seemed). And then
She rose up suddenly, as when
We do not fully comprehend
The presence of some dreamed-of friend.

“ 'Tis not a dream! and you are here
In sooth, Emile. See, Father, dear ——
Why dost restrain me thus, Emile?
Ah, God have pity! Now I feel
The fearful truth. Why art thou gone,
My father? Why must I live on,
So sadly, mournfully alone,
That every hope in life is done? ”

She gently kissed the pallid brow,
So cold, yet scarcely furrowed now;
Pressed her hot cheek against the hair,
So thin and white. The soft night air
Fell 'round them, as if to caress.
Unheeded surely, ne'ertheless
She felt at last its tenderness.
And tears began dry lids to press.

They led her kindly from the room,
And let her weep or moan, "the gloom
Might sooner pass." At any rate,
They knew no words could palliate
Life's great great sorrow; — and therefore
They wisely from all words forebore,
Each heart, for her too truly sore,
With cant or text to wound her more.

Emile and other friends remain
A few sad days at Inverstain.
He knew not why he had been called,—
And Eva's mind was so enthralled
By her deep grief that she forgot
All things except that lonely spot
Where sigh or prayer were answered not,
Nor tears, though falling fast and hot.

But hark! there came a mournful wail
Of woe, and want, a fearful tale,
And harrowing. Of hungry death
Gathering with pestilential breath
From every home, from every fold,
The blithe, the young, the grave, the old,
The warm of heart, and those whose cold
And callous souls craved only gold.
It was a wild despairing cry

That rose beneath the Southern sky.
But words are vain — vain to express
The human woe, the wretchedness,
In that sad wail — when hope had fled: —
A wolfish cry, for daily bread,
For help to nurse by fever bed —
To bury out of sight the dead.

Emile sought Eva's presence; there
He tried to rouse her from despair;
From its dull numbness rouse her brain
And lead her thoughts to life again.
“Dear friend,” said he, “some while ago
You summoned me. I've come to know
How I may serve you, ere I go
Where, Heaven grant, I soothe some woe.”

He told her how the Saffron Foe
Of human life raged to and fro;
And how the dead and dying lay
In numbers greater each new day;
Until the earth, the air, the sky,
Looked fateful to each hopeless eye,
The living in their agony
Cried out: “Help! help us! or we die!”

She listened calmly, one pale cheek
Leaned on her hand; she did not speak;
But knelt beside the grave and said
Her last farewell unto her dead.
She rose and turned her pale young face
Unto Emile. It bore the trace
Of new resolve. They walked apace
In silence from that lonely place.

And then she said, “No matter now
What was my father's wish, or how

He hoped again to reinstate
His name thro me among the great
And grand old families, where rest
Our ancestors, 'neath altars blest.
For royal blood, to me, at best
Seems little more than idle jest.

“E'en my own mother died because
Her brother scorned a monarch's laws.
Although that monarch was so near
A kinsman to my father dear,
Shall I seek station to regain
Which brought my parents naught save pain?
What now, a comfort for me hath?
Think'st thou, along life's blighted path
May spring, for me, some aftermath
To hide the furrows of Fate's wrath?

“If this could be,—not on a shore
Where Southland were my home no more.
Can name or place bring back my youth,—
My trusting heart, my hope of truth?
Oh, friend, I am alone! alone!
In saddest fullness of the tone,—
Of all my girlhood's joys not one
Remains. All happy thoughts are gone:

“Yet human hearts, tho' fit to break,
Some gentle duties yet can make;
May still some grief or dry some tear,
For sake of bringing others cheer.
You tell me of a great despair
Upon our South, of lack of care
And woman's nursing. Tell me where
'Tis needed most. My place is there.”

De Vela's eyes were dim with tears,
As thought flew backward through the years,
When this young girl was blithe and gay
And happy as a bird in May.
But sorrow-stricken now she stood
All lonely in her womanhood;
And in her face he saw the mood
To give her life for others' good.

"I would not, if I could gainsay,
Dear Eva, what thine impulse may
Point out as surest path to find
Nepenthe for thy saddened mind.
But art thou sure: that thou canst bear
The sights of pain and death,—the wear
Of soul and body; the despair
Of woe, which leaves no room for prayer?"

"These must be brave! Oh, canst thou think
I would from any danger shrink?
Thou sayest the North has sent them aid?
Shall help from home be still delayed?
No! No! Let's do our part. There is
Within this life such mysteries
That midst its deepest miseries
There's balm for saddest memories."

The Summer time passed on; and oh,
To those who suffered 'twas so slow!
For Sorrow clogs time's feet with lead,
As joy will give them wings instead.
And Eva with the nurses went,
Day after day, till almost spent
Was her young strength. And yet the pent-
Up grief had found but little vent.

One day a message came to her
Which made her inmost spirit stir.
“Come quickly,” thus it ran, “or fate
May make thy coming all too late.
I dare not die till I reveal
What I forever would conceal,
Lest thou, for me, such loathing feel
’Twould ’gainst me all forgiveness steel.”

“God pity me,” she said, “if I
Should fail to heed his mournful cry.”
She went, and there, with sad surprise,
She saw the fast bedimmed eyes
Of Conrad Neille. And oh! the deep,
The thrilling pathos, in their sweep
Of her pale face, as if to keep
Its impress through death’s endless sleep.

“Come nearer, Eva. Let me see
Thy face,” he said, “although to me,
Each line of care, each trace of tears,
Pierce like a sword, these later years.
I love thee. *That*, I need not tell —
Thou knowest it; but, oh, how well
Thou *canst* not know! Let devils tell
Who grasp at heaven and gain but hell.

“There, let me clasp thy cool, soft hand,—
’Twill give me courage, mayhap, and
’Twill lead me to the viewless brink
Of Death, where I so soon must sink.
But listen. Thou hast ne’er forgot
Thy Ivan Vaughn — and he was not
E’er false to thee. It was my shot
Which fell’d him, when the fight was hot

“And fierce that day. And when I sought
Him midst the slain, a something fraught
With shame, misgiving, and regret
Filled me, and has not left me yet.
We had been boys together; grew
To manhood so. And but for you
I still had loved him. Great and true
He ever was. Could I undo

“That deed of cowardice and hate,
I yet might wrestle with this fate.
I cannot tell thee half. Forgive,
While yet I see, and hear, and live.
There, 'tis enough! Don't turn away
Thy dear, dear face; but let me lay
And drink its beauty while I may.
Ah, God! Death come! Pray for me, pray!”

“Too late,” she said at last, “for now
Thy soul is gone.” And o'er his brow
She passed her trembling hand, and then
She closed his eyes; while “might have been”
Rang fiercely down the bygone years,
And locked the fount of woman's tears.
“If Ivan's truth,” she thought, “were hers,
Why was he silent all these years.”

She looked again upon the form
Before her there; and tho' still warm,
The features took the Saffron hue
So weird, and strange; and then her true
Pure nature rose. “Forgive thee? Yes.
May God forgive thee none the less.
Tho' thou didst bring me sore distress.
Oh, life! Oh, love! what nothingness!”

She clasped her pale thin hands upon
Her paler brow, and then anon
She roused herself to summon aid.
The men came in, and gently bade
Her go. She saw with them Emile,
Whose dark eyes glanced, like burnished steel,
One instant o'er dead Conrad Neille,
Then drooped, as if fain to conceal

Some feeling deep, now life was gone,—
Some memory of evil done.
Emile approached her now and said,
“Would I could stifle, for the dead,
Ungenerous thought,—as thou canst do.
But come with me,—one good and true
Keeps death at bay—that he to you
May speak. Come, brace thy heart anew.”

He led her thence; and as they went
From many a heart a prayer was sent
From couches where the feeble lay,
Who knew her kindness day by day.
Emile, in haste, still led her on,
Unto a couch apart, whereon
A figure lay, whose face, so wan,
Grew bright for her:—’Twas Ivan Vaughn!

He clasped her hands. “At last! At last!”
He murmured eagerly and fast,
“My own beloved, thou’rt come at last!
And art mine own, tho’ life be past?
I read once more thy matchless eyes,
Ere death my vision can disguise.
And oh, beyond the blue, blue skies
There’s naught I’ll half so dearly prize!

“ Press thy warm lips upon my brow,
Careworn for thee — don’t leave me now.
Would God we never more should part,
And we could die, clasped heart to heart.
But heed thee: When the angels meet
My soul, I’ll list thy coming feet
As erewhile here, that I may greet
Thy spirit first, with welcome sweet.
’Tis growing dark. And I must die,
I know too well,— the end draws nigh.
Emile, true friend, tell all. The lapse
Of these sad years were best perhaps,—
We know not. Ah, I cannot see
Thee now, dear love. Wilt sing for me?
I hunger for thy voice: ’Twill be
Life’s calming, last, sweet lullaby.”

A cruel stillness fell around.
She tried to sing, but waked no sound.
She touched his brow — once more grown hot; —
He slowly said, “ I hear thee not.
Art singing, Eva now?” But still
Her voice refused her anxious will.
She tried again. A low, sweet thrill
Of trembling song arose, until

It gathered strength, and filled the room
With tender pathos. And the gloom
Of death and fever seemed awhile
To be subdued. Adown the aisle
Between the couches rolled the song,
And bore such influence along,
As could to nothing else belong
At such a time, o’er such a throng:

Anon, it grew so soft and low,
Ears strained to catch the faintest flow
Of that rare music. Listening, there
Were spirits lifted from despair.
But Eva sang for Ivan Vaughn,—
Kneeling beside him, still sang on,
Till one long sigh told life was gone —
Then laid her head his breast upon.

Emile De Velas watched them both
With sympathy, and still was loth
To move or speak. What is it now
That blanches white his lip and brow?
He bent his head, and saw with pain
The vision he at Inverstain
With prophet's eyes had seen. How plain
It all before him came again!

“Dead! Both dead! Oh, weary-hearted
Joined in death, in life so parted!
May your spirits wake in gladness
In that realm unknown to sadness;
May you find the peace and blessing
Longed for here, and missed possessing,—
While through lonely years progressing
To your presence I am pressing.

“But—what is this?” He clasped his hand
Upon his brow. He could not stand —
The room grew dark — and then he fell
Beside the friends he loved so well.
The nurses found him there; and they
With kindness bore Emile away,
To watch and sooth him as he lay
With fever wrestling many a day.

In fever, venting out his heart,
His life, its great unselfish part.
He babbled of the friends now gone —
The peerless maid, and Ivan Vaughn.
She — worshipped as the sainted are,—
And yet for Ivan, all his care.
Anon, he stood among the slain —
Charged treachery on battle-plain
In wrath; — exhausted then, again
His mind returned to Inverstain.

At last he slowly came once more
To life, from near the farther shore;
But without aim, and without care,
With that dull feeling of despair,
Born of the thought that all is vain,—
That broken threads and tangled skein
Of human effort must remain
Forever unrestored again.

Emile sat brooding in this way,
So sadly weary, when one day
A stranger came, and gently said;
“A package, sir; found on the dead:
Witheld from you till now, as best ——”
Emile scarce heard, for on the crest
Of Eva's seal he gazed. “Request
Of hers,” he said. ’Twas her bequest.

Time passed. Again De Velas stood
Within the darkly shaded wood
Of Inverstain, and wreathed with flowers
Two marble shafts. There, many hours,
With head made bare he came. There come
About him softly, as they roam,
The troop of orphans whose glad home
Emile has made the place become.

The days have gathered into years,
And eyes weep less of bitter tears,
For time has soothed the stricken hearts
With balm, that it alone imparts.
And though it cannot quite erase
The marks reflected in the face
Of grief, or pain, or vacant place,
It brings, at least, a patient grace.

And, meanwhile, men forgot to brood
O'er lesser things in angry mood.
Our South evinced she could be great,
E'en as the North forgot her hate,
And when we most expected none
Had given help, as she had done
Had war made naught, in years ago,
For which each should to each atone.

Divested of each section's poison
The mind shall gather grateful foison;
And fireside tales, in years to come,
Shall consecrate the love of home;
And love of country shall be found,
When North, East, West, and South are bound
Together honoring each mound,
Which holds "our dead" as hallowed ground.



MISCELLANEOUS



A GREETING TO THE PEOPLE

(Written for the Exposition at New Orleans.)

ALL Hail!

Friends from a hundred lands!
We come with out-stretched hands,
With a greeting pure and strong,
In a symphony of song;
Which can faintly tell at best
The earnestness and zest,
The joyful pride, that starts
In welcome from our hearts.

Come, from the frozen lands,
Of snow and ice-girt strands;
From where the steppes rise
To meet the cloud-rimmed skies;
From old historic shore,
And the home of mystic lore;
From where the sand-dunes roll
The dread sirocco's scroll;
Where Sphinx's eyes of doom
Gaze on, with changeless gloom,
In their dumb questioning
Of what the ages bring;
From the green isles in the sea,
From the lands of minstrelsy;

And from the glowing South,
Whose warm, voluptuous mouth
Ever blesses noblest deeds
With her tender, loving creeds,—
As generous as the sweep
Of her rivers, broad and deep;

From the farther scant-trod plains
Of uncivilized domains;
From the wide, wide Ocean's shores,
Which every clime explores —
We welcome, welcome all!
May great blessing on you fall!

But — if selfish, be it so —
We would give a warmer glow
In the greeting to "Our Own" —
From our home, so greatly grown.
Just as brothers welcome back
Others from divergent track,
Thus, we fain would sweetest song
Give to them amid this throng.
Ye from North, and from the East;
From the Midland, from the West;
From the Southland — not the least —
Warm your welcome, and the best!

We quarreled in the olden time —
'Tis the burden of many a rhyme; —
Nor do we forget to-day.
Nor can we forget alway
A tribute of love to pay,
To those "who wore the gray."
And the sigh of anguish born
Of our loss should meet no scorn,
But a sympathy deep and strong,
As to the bereaved belong,—
Should over your hearts be stealing,
To quiver their chords of feeling.

The furrows of time are deep,
And into their depths we sweep
All save the love and regret
For those we cannot forget,

Who stood 'neath the upas-shade
Of Fate, where our shrines were made.

No matter whatever we thought,
The battle was waged and fought.
Now together we'll seek to find
If a common interest will bind
Our hearts with a closer tie;
To strive for a place so high,
So bright, in the annals of Fame
That shall crown with honored name
When hundreds of years are done,
In this land near the setting sun.
List to the mighty flow
As our river waters go.
Will ye heed the lessons they teach?
As they haste the ocean to reach?

Born amid the norther lakelets,
Winter-fed by snowy flakelets,
Small and weak its way beginning,
Still persistent, it is winning;
Gathering strength as it grows older,
Pebbles, brush, nor even boulder,—
Naught can change its destiny.
Onward, onward now 'tis going,
Through the midland now 'tis flowing —
Ever onward to the sea.

From right and left with giant's grasp
It takes and holds within its clasp
Whate'er it will, eternally.
Through the Southland bloom and heather,
Warming in the pleasant weather,
Flowing grandly, thus together
Mutely binding all forever,

By the mingling of the rivers,
Into one, by which the givers
Each shall reach its destiny,
In the bosom of the sea.
If we choose to read it well,
Here's our nation's parallel:—
Oh, Meh-shah-sepah!* thus we trace
Thy message to this newer race;—
Though grandly thou swept o'er the sod
When Silence sat alone with God.

We have bidden from every condition
Of man the skilled and the wise,
At the birth of a noble ambition
To find where excellence lies:
And here, united now, we stand,
To welcome strangers to "our land."

We gratefully welcome all ye
Who bring to this "Land of the free"
Your plants which are useful or rare;
Or things that are strange or are fair;
The fruits of your cunning and skill,
The crowns of your patience and will;
For plants, that from distant lands come,
May find a more genial home,
Or gain here some virtues more rare,
Or grow into beauty more fair;

Too oft, in this life, has some mind
Suggested what others must find;
And web which some weaver has left
Another must furnish with weft:

* Meh-shah-sepah.—The true Indian name of the Mississippi River, meaning, "the path of gathered waters," *not* "the father of waters."

And many a lesson, we'll learn,
And brighter will genius burn;
Far inference limitless is,—
Aye, wide as Eternity is:—
And the fetterless mind is free,—
Free to fathom the great To Be:—
To fashion and work as it will,—
To question the doubter's "Be still!"
(Whose quicksands still murmur, "Thus far!")
To leap these, and leave them afar:

Perfection we cannot attain,
But nearer each step that we gain
Shall bring us a triumph at last,
As the Future melts into the Past:

EMINENCE, Chambers Co., Texas, 1884.

TO WHAT END?

*Longum illud tempus cum non ero magis me movet quam
hoc exiquiem.*—CICERO.*

SOON this life must all be ended,
All its joy, its hope, its care;
Soon will death, uncomprehended,
Overtake us unaware.
Hearts and souls so strangely blended
If each wanders unattended
Here must sever—who can say,
Through eternity's long day?

Why should man drink deep of sorrow,
If death ends this life began;
If there looms no fair to-morrow
To this little, narrow span?

* "The long time when I shall not exist has more effect upon me than this scant [or present] time."

Creeds which make us anguish borrow
From the darkness of the grave,
Only mind and spirit harrow,
Nor were ever meant to save.

We regret the sere leaf falling
Though its death give ripened fruit,
Swallows to each other calling,
Soon to leave our eaves so mute.—
Rare the joy, so unenthralling,
That we wish it nevermore —
Can we help the dread, appalling,
Of the state when *all* is o'er?

Why is every effort laden
With uncertainty and doubt,
If the soul may find no Aiden
Where these fiends are shut without?
While the human heart is pulsing
With endeavor's highest aim
Comes the chilling thought, convulsing —
Is there aught death may not claim?

Why this ceaseless, ceaseless burning
For rich draughts from wisdom's fount,
If the mind can gain no learning,
Save the dim lore time can count?
Why the wild, unanswered yearning
Fair fruition's fruit to grasp —
Without fear of soon discerning
'Tis but ashes in our clasp?

Yonder sun will soon be setting,—
Though he grandly sink to-night;—
Morrow brings him but forgetting
Be its own not half so bright.

Vain, my soul, thine anxious fretting,
Thy dear idols still to hold —
Let them go, without regretting,
'Ere thou see them stark and cold.

E'en this life, so swiftly fleeting,
Has some moments of delight,
Which but seem the threshold greeting
Of existence far more bright.
Let me not be found retreating
From a path where duty leads,
Let me not my soul be cheating
By the sophistry of creeds.

IMPROMPTU

A WORD or look has often broke
The subtle binding of love's yoke;
Or like some poisoned seed they bear
Remorseful fruitage many a year;
Or leave the heart, like some sunk river,
A sunless silent thing forever,
Condemned to throb throughout its tears
Unheeding heaven's smiles or tears,
Until at last by slow degrees
'Tis lost in death's dark ocean's lees.

Can love restrain such word or look;
And strong will angry passion brook?
Or like our genial clime transmute
The poison to delicious fruit?
Or turn the river thro' some rent
Betwixt life's rocks, 'ere it is sent
Beyond, that it may peacefully
Find light and warmth eternally?

AFTER ALL

I KNOW that we, in Youth's fair morning,
Will launch our ships in spite of warning.
We freight them with our hearts' best treasure,
Ambitions aims, and dreams of pleasure;—
And glad-faced Hope, all fair and smiling,
Sits at the helms, with songs beguiling;—
While joy-crest billows swell and glisten
To bear them from us while we listen.
Each leaves the heart bright promise bearing,—
Like those proud barks strange oceans daring—
To seek some land all flower-strewn
Where tears and griefs are never known.

And yet I know that few have ever
So ventured but went down forever:—
For while we watch, our God-speed waving,
While yet our feet Time's tide is laving,
The gathering clouds of anguish hover,
And doubt and disappointment cover
Our sea and sky, till Life's vast ocean
Is tossing in such fierce commotion,—
Our fairest ship, 'mid reefs of sorrow,
Is wrecked ere dawns Youth's swift to-morrow,—
Then as the wild waves lash and fret,
They bear to manhood vain regret.

Oh, friend! will wealth, or place, or station,—
Or, fawning Flattery's adulation,—
Or Fame her paeans loudly chanting,—
Console the heart its treasures wanting?
Say, will its pulses thrill and tremble
As first they did, if these assemble?
Or must the sands at last be wasted,
While gall and wormwood yet are tasted?

And shall we still, like sea-shells, never
Forget the songs of youth forever,—
But moan their echo through decay,
A requiem of the past alway?

Perhaps 'tis best our brightest blessing
Will never linger for caressing.
But oh! beyond Life's shade and shimmer,
Where light and darkness o'er us glimmer,
Some hope which shall have grown immortal
Shall wait within the pearly portal,
To greet the soul in that Hereafter
To which our tears and prayers shall waft her:—
Perhaps some love we thought deep-hidden
Beneath the wreck of years, unbidden,
Will spring to meet us bright and fair—
Unhindered and unchided there.

THE OUTCAST'S WAIL *

PAIN! Pain! Pain!
A skeleton cold and stark
Pain! Pain! Pain!
Is the future looming dark.
The spirit stretches its hands in despair,
For the pain is greater than it can bear.

Gloom! Gloom! Gloom!
Aye, darker than wings of night.
Gloom! Gloom! Gloom!

* During the war a beautiful young woman, who had been the idol of friends and relations, was found dead with her new-born babe in a deserted house near the river. There was a storm of sleet and rain the previous night, in intervals of which she was heard wailing and praying—sometimes for vengeance upon her betrayer, for death for herself.

With no ray of coming light
A dismal cloud settles down on my heart,
Sullen and dark—will it ever depart?

Dream! Dream! Dream!
'Twas only a dream, Alas!
Dream! Dream! Dream!
What ne'er shall come to pass:—
A dream in which hope and joy did entwine
The future with bliss, that could not be mine.

Bliss! Bliss! Bliss!
They tell us of it in rhymes.
Bliss! Bliss! Bliss!
Perhaps, in the after-times,
When the weary head in the grave is low,
And the heart to its mother dust shall go.

Rest! Rest! Rest!
Will it ever come again?
Rest! Rest! Rest!
For the burdened soul and brain.
But where can the homeless wanderer rest
Till the grass grows o'er the death-stilled breast?

Home! Home! Home!
Oh, to be homeless and poor!
Home! Home! Home!
With memory of home before
And the mocking thought of what "might have
been,"
Making the anguish more bitter and keen.

Life! Life! Life!
A shadowy thing at best.
Life! Life! Life!
A painful time of unrest.

Its happiest hours are tintured with pain
For the thirsting heart and quivering brain.

Weep! Weep! Weep!
Till the days grow into years.
Weep! Weep! Weep!
Till the eyes can shed no tears,
And the fountains of grief are drained and dry,
And nothing is left but to lie down and die.

Cold! Cold! Cold!
Are the wind, the sleet, and the night.
Cold! Cold! Cold!
May my heart be, ere the light.
Ere yet all good from my spirit is hurled,
In its ruthless hate of this heartless world.

Death! Death! Death!
How many mortals there be!
Death! Death! Death!
Who earnestly call for thee!
Ah! do pitying angels stay thy hand,
Till the soul looks up to the Better Land?

LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

If we did but prize the flowers
That along our pathway grow;
Nor would waste so many hours
Seeking for the thorn below;
If we strove to help each other
Ever upward on the way;
Nor would holy feelings smother
'Neath the ashes of decay;

If we did not judge so blindly
What we do not understand;
If our words were spoken kindly—
Lent we all a friendly hand:
Would there be so much of sorrow
Crowded in life's narrow time?
Would not earth some brightness borrow
From the glory-lighted clime?

There are tear-washed, pallid faces
Peering out upon the night;
There are many gloomy places,
To which love would bring the light.
Shall we leave them wan and weary,
When a little word or deed
Might some bosom make less dreary
If it kindly come in need?

Oh! there is a holy pleasure
Welling up from fountains pure;
And it yields a precious treasure,
Which we all may, here, secure;—
'Tis in living for each other,
Thinking less of self and gain;
Seeing in each one a brother,
Whom we find in want and pain.

BROKEN IDOLS

SORROWS which may not be spoken,
Far too deep for tear or token;
Cherished idols, crushed and broken,
Wildly worshiped, tho' of clay;
Human hearts in silence breaking
From some fond dream rudely waking;—
These are round us every day.

Silently the spirit's wailing,
In its deep woe unavailing;
All its earnest faith is trailing,
 With its idol in the dust.
And none hears the bitter groaning,
For the heart breaks without moaning,
 When it mourns a broken trust.

Oh! must life be ever seeming?
Is there no joy but in dreaming;
Nor a rainbow brightly gleaming,
 On the dark clouds of despair?
Beck'ning to the heart grief-laden,
From the far-off blessed Aiden,
 Through the privilege of prayer?
Yes! Oh, yes! There is a fountain,—
There's a never-ceasing fountain,—
Flowing o'er earth's sin-reared mountain
 From "Our Father's" great, white throne.
And hope, like the sunlight glinting
Through the wintry frost-work flinting,
 Gives us glimpses of a home,—

Where no spirit will grow weary,
Nor in desolation dreary,
Chant its mournful miserere,—
 For no broken idol's there;
Where the blessings are eternal,
And our joy is bliss supernal,
 In that wondrous world so fair.

THE LOVED AND LOST

FITFULLY the moon is shining
Over wood and river,—
And I'm thinking of those dear ones
 Who are gone forever

From the heart that dearly prized them,—
Through the gloomy portal
Which divides this life of changes
From the bright immortal.

Sadly to the by-gone moments,
With my heart grown fonder,
O'er our griefs and o'er our pleasures,
I, in memory wander;
Gathering up the broken fragments
Of the words then spoken,
Thinking over looks and gestures,
Which might love betoken.

And each word, and look, and gesture
Bring a sweet assurance
That they love me, and remember —
So I gain endurance,
Strength to bear the painful partings,
Which are yet before me; —
And a resignation holy,
Hovers gently o'er me.

But if in this retrospection
Anger I discover,—
Then my cup with drops of anguish
Almost runneth over,
For those words or deeds unkindly.
Vain this late contrition,—
Little thought I they would bear me
Such a sad fruition.

Oh! in future, may my bosom
Evermore be shielded
From the thought of angry feeling
To which I have yielded.

May the "might have been" so gloomy
Grieve my spirit never,
When I think of those who loved me,
And are gone forever.

"JUDGE NOT"

FROM some aching bosom the wild madden'd cry
Forever is rising, "Oh, God, let me die!"
Man's spirit e'en dares all eternity's woe
That earth's bitter sorrows it thus may forego.

Poor world-weary pilgrim, take heart for thy task,
Nor that it be lessened repiningly ask.
Tho' darker, still darker the storm-clouds may lower,
They yet are controlled by a Father's kind power.

"There remaineth a rest for the people of God"—
What a comfort-fraught promise, for those who have
trod
The wine-press of misery un murmuringly here,
Awaiting the blessings in yon brighter sphere.

But thou, in whose chalice yet mingles no gall,
Around whom life's blessings doth clustering fall,
Beware with what judgment thou judgest the wretch
Whose soul on the torture-rack daily must stretch!

Could ye know the sore trials that prompt what they
do,
Their deeds might not startle nor horrify you;—
Perhaps if thy spirit were tortured likewise,
As desperate, as bitter, might be its low cries.

Let the mantle of charity tenderly fall
Over erring ones here, for so sinful are all
We may not pass by with, "I'm holier than thou,"
Lest the mark of a Cain shall be set on our brow.

Oh! many there be whose life shows no stain,
That shall knock at the portals of heaven in vain;
While the pitiful beggar they spurn from their door,
Shall sweetly and peacefully rest evermore.

There is ever a beam in the hypocrite's eye,
Tho' the motes in his brother's so quick to descry.
Oh! take heed lest our God, in the day of His wrath,
Shall take from that servant e'en that which he hath.

Why judge ye, earth's weary ones, and deem your-
selves pure,
Who are life's sadder trials not called to endure?
Know ye not that the gold which the fire doth refine,
The purer is proven and the brighter shall shine?

USQUE QUO DOMINE

OH, God! my aching heart would respite borrow
From its long weary woe of creeping years.
Oh, let me hope that on some bright to-morrow
I yet shall know some recompense for tears!

If I have erred, Thy mercy's quick discerning
The good and ill as they within me strove —
Like Noah's dove, when to the Ark returning,
My spirit seeks again Thy sheltering love.

I ask not, Father, for the careless feeling
A little child can know on earth alone;
Nor would I memory's pages yet be sealing;
Nor count as vain the flight of years ago: —

I would their teachings, on this poor heart falling
Like cooling rain upon the parchéd earth,
Should soothe its pain, until I hear Thee calling
My soul back to the home of its glad birth.

How long! how long! My God! must I be waiting
While bathing with my tears Thy holy feet?
To hear Thy voice, my spirit reinstating
In Thy dear love, with blessedness complete?

How long! My God! before these hands are folded
In peaceful rest beneath the coffin lid?
When in immortal guise, my soul remoulded,
Shall know Thy love, behind life's trials hid.

Oh, help me wait in patience for the ending!
For Faith, so oft, sinks fainting by the way —
And let Thy peace, upon my heart descending,
Give me new strength and hope each passing day.

INDIAN SUMMER

THE forest gorgeously is robed these sweet Novem-
ber days,
And over all the woodland now there rests a mellow
haze;
A kind of dreamy mournfulness, as if the fading
year
Was gathering all its richest gems to decorate its
bier.

The joyousness of Spring is passed, with all its lovely
flowers,
Its merry birds, its laughing winds, its pleasure
freighted hours;
The Summer with its full blown joys, the harvest
time is gone;—
And soon the year will pass away, its mission here
be done.

The leaves are falling one by one, as sure and
silently
As hopes fall from a gentle heart when broken
wantonly,
And in their glorious loveliness they flutter down to
earth,
Their record there to write in dust, with weeds of
humbler birth.

The winds that sang their angelus amid these very
leaves,
While Summer linger'd with us, no requiem o'er
them breathes,—
They've wandered off to other climes, where spring-
time yet may dwell,
To glance amid the orange-groves or ocean-music
swell.

The trees will soon be stripp'd of all; their limbs, so
gaunt and bare,
Like arms upraised imploringly, of giants in de-
spair,—
Will mock us, in their nakedness, for all their sum-
mer bloom,—
And therefore comes their mournfulness before the
winter's gloom.

Methinks 'twere not so hard to die, if we could pass
like these,
From life to death, in loveliness, as fade the autumn
leaves;
Without a folly to regret, without the shuddering
fear,
That we have idly cast aside our destined mission
here.

IMPROMPTU

I WOULD not that thy heart should swell
With one impassioned thought of me,
If in that memory could dwell
Aught which would bring a pang to thee.

But I would come when happiness
In peaceful dreams holds sweet control,
And wake thy deepest tenderness
In spirit-union with thy soul.

THE OLD YEAR'S RECORD

THE Old Year's full record is written,
And the angel Gabriel stands
Before the White Throne; and, grief-smitten,
He opens the scroll in his hands.
The spirits of just men around him
Are waiting the record to hear,
For some, to whom life's ties had bound them,
Have part 'mid the scenes of this year.

The King, his great seal yet withholding,
Is grieved for the wickedness here;
He pities mankind, while beholding
The works set against him this year.

He listens, to hear if ascending
Are prayers, in contrition's low tone,
And seeks to find some who are bending
The knee to the true God alone.

The angel of mercy, adoring,
Has flown to the foot of the Throne,
And pointing to mortals, imploring,
That God will but seal them His own.
She joins their petition to cancel
The sins of the swift-passing year —
And sweet as the incense from chancel
And church is that prayer to God's ear.

But only a few are thus praying,
For sin hath wild riot to-night,
Will God, His just anger, be staying
For sake of those few in the right?
The swift winged moments are flying,
And bearing the Old Year away;
It soon in the Past will be lying,
Its record sealed for the Great Day.

The midnight's deep chimes are slow-tolling,
The knell of the vanishing year;
The angel the record is rolling,
And drops on its pages a tear.
But Jesus cries, "Hear me, my Father!
I wash this dark scroll in my blood.
I take from it only, my Father,
The wicked, and leave there the good.

"For those, in my own Name, now pleading
I pray Thee, I know, not in vain;
But pity the careless, unheeding,
And bless them, and free them from stain.

They know not, Oh, Father ! their danger,
'Mid folly, and passion, and strife;
Consume them not yet, in Thine anger,
But give them one year more of life."

Now rapture, and praises, and blessing,
And angel's loud chorusing song :—
God's mercy and goodness expressing,—
Are rising from heaven's bright throng.
Let earth join the anthems of gladness,
And humbly begin the New Year,
And there shall be little of sadness
For those who will live in God's fear.

BURIAL ON AN INDIAN MOUND

Room, warriors, room !
Room for the pale-face child !
In your mausoleum,
Room for the undefiled.
Ages undisturbed you've slept,
And from man your memory's swept.
Those who o'er you may have wept,
And your "death-fires" lighted kept,*

Long, long years ago have found
In their happy hunting ground
Mysteries of the Spirit-Land
Mortals ne'er can understand.

* It was the custom of some of the Indian tribes who formerly inhabited Louisiana to keep a fire burning for three days and nights upon the graves of their dead, lest the spirits should lose their way before reaching the "Happy Hunting Ground."

Ah, warriors brave!
Far distant is the year
Since in this wild-wood grave
Your forms were gathered here.
Were you battling for your right
With the Pale-face in his might?
Or with fratricidal hand
Did the Red Men slay your band?
None can tell us. There remains
Only what this mound contains;—
And conjecture seeks in vain
Something of your lives to gain.

Room, warriors, room!
Only a little space.
'Mid your silent gloom
We would our dead one place,
Quick and fast is sunk the spade,
Soon the hollow grave is made;
Round the damp sides here and there
Whitened skulls are gleaming bare,
Which my frame and heart doth fill
With a shudder strange and chill.
Once these were the homes of thought,
With revenge or mercy fraught;—
Mayhap war schemes brave and bold
Formed where now is damp earth-mold.

“Dust and ashes” all,—
The universal doom;
Whether velvet pall
Or war-paint deck the tomb.
Ye, as dreamless sleeping here,
Rest, as if on gilded bier.
Wherefore should encoffined be
Limbs that were in life so free?

Wherefore should a shroud enfold
Forms of those who were so bold? —
Do we mourn our loved ones more
Decked with richest trappings o'er?

We have come to-day,
Without a wish to wrong —
We have come to lay
Our babe your "braves" among.
Let your manes' wrath be done,
And receive our little one.
There, we've laid him down to rest.
Spade the earth in gently, lest
In the damp mold there should be
Traces of humanity.
So, will sacred be the mound
Where this little grave is found.

A FANCY

A BRIGHT mantle of crimson and gold
And purple hung low in the west;
It was waiting the day to enfold
That soon would be sinking to rest.
The sun was still lingering awhile
In love with both woodland and sea,
While the earth blushing warm in his smile
Seemed fairer than ever to be.

And a rose-tree in beauty and bloom
Its blossoms had lavishly spread —
They were shedding their sweetest perfume
And wealth o'er a maiden's fair head; —
While just touching her innocent face
Half-opened some bright buds reclined, —
Did they droop, that their loveliest grace,
Was gathered from that they entwined?

Like a Parsean priestess at prayer,
She watched the light fade in the skies;
And the glow of idolatry there
Shone bright in her beautiful eyes.
"He will come," she was murmuring low,
"Though shadows grow gloomy and tall.
He is true as the sunlight, I know;
He will come. He will come, after all."

But the night brought her quivering fears;
And doubt, with its dagger-like smart,
Like a shadow fell over her years
And crushed out the faith in her heart.
Then she knew her idolatrous trust
Had passed with the evening's light,
That it evermore moldering must
Lay shrouded in darkness of night.

Then the morning saw roses in tears,
That yesterday blossomed so bright;
And as Time flings to mortals its years
The roses still weep in the night
For the remnant of Paradise gone,
Which passed with the loss of man's truth,—
And the doubt and the agony born,
From death to the hope of our youth.

SILENCE

WHEN the heart in deep devotion
Has been filled with sweet emotion,
Then has suddenly been broken,—
No tear forth-gushing gives the token;
Nor murmuring voice, nor sorrowing word,
Nor tale of sadness can be told,
The hidden mystery to unfold.

But with the hands crossed o'er the breast,
The bloodless lips together pressed —
One listens to the beating heart
Which at its own wild throbs doth start: —
Scarce dares to breathe, for fear the breath
Should stay the welcome dart of death.
With eyes imploring, looks to heaven,
And asks that aid and strength be given.

Oh! this is agony indeed,
And often causes hearts to bleed,—
Hearts that with sympathy can glow
And share another spirit's woe.
And what is *Silence* — then so well
This agony of soul can tell,
Which speaks without a voice — and yet,
That silent voice none can forget.

A CARTOON

OUT on the wide sea are sometimes floating pieces of driftwood; perhaps the motion of the restless waves brings them near to each other. They touch, then are separated by the waters; the distance between them widens, until they are washed ashore in far different climes.

So with human beings. We meet and greet each other — then sever eternally. Yet the impress of spirit may linger forever. And a prayer for happiness rise from each heart for the other, that shall bear sweet influences like summer Southern breezes over the broad ocean of Life.

A MOTHER'S WISH

COME tune, my muse, thy sweetest lyre,
And let its richest music swell;
Within me, like Promethean fire,
Are burning thoughts I cannot quell.
For I would rend the misty veil
That shrouds my children's future path,
Although perhaps my cheeks would pale
At visions which that vista hath.

Two gentle girls — whose childish brow,
Unwrinkled, fair, and innocent,
I fain would keep as smooth as now,
If wishes were not impotent,—
I would that I their fragile bark
Might steer from all life's dangerous shoals,
Whereon, when hope's light groweth dark,
Are wrecked so many human souls.

I cannot bear to think there lies
Deep fountains of misfortune's tears
Within my darlings' sweet blue eyes,—
To be unsealed in future years
O'er wasted hopes, and pain to see
Their heart's rich treasures cast away,
And love's bright glow a mockery,—
Like glistening sea-weed wet with spray.

Oh! would my eyes might shed their tears,
And would my heart their griefs might bear!
I'd shield them through their future years
From every woe; from every care.
My gentle Zella's soft brown hair
Should never grow less dark than now;
And darling Lillie's curls so fair
Should never silver o'er her brow.

It may not be. However kind
Our yearning hearts, God gives to each
A different fate, nor can we find
A way through other lives to reach,—
We can but pray hope's beacon light
Shall never o'er life's seas grow dim,
And strive to guide our own course right —
Then trust the rest in faith to Him.

TAKEN AWAY

LAY the little body down,
Close those sweet blue eyes; —
They will open, darling one,
Where there waits a golden crown
For thee, in the skies.

Close those lips. Lingering there,
See, a smile is, yet!
Gently smooth the shining hair
From the forehead, pale and fair,
Where Death's seal is set.

Wast thou not afraid to die,
Wandering alone
To the vast Eternity,
And the dread Reality,
Of a world unknown?

Or did angels guide thy feet
Through Death's fearful strait,
That no terrors thou shouldst meet
Till our Saviour thou shouldst greet
At the heavenly gate?

Thou hast gone; and we are taught
Thy pure infant soul
Not a stain of earth had caught,
Tho' life is, with sin, so fraught,—
Thou hast won the goal.

Such as thou the Kingdom is
Of the world above,
Christ hath said, and now thou'rt His,
Taken from earth's miseries.
Shall we doubt His love?

Better so, aye, better so!
All our weeping's vain
Human life is full of woe —
Better to our God to go,
Safe from every pain.

Selfish still, our hearts are sore,
Mourning for thy loss;
'Tis so hard to think no more
Thou'lt be with us, as before; —
Hard to bear our cross.

We must yield, for thou art gone
"To that distant bourne,
Whence no traveler can come."
Oh, may we, in that bright home,
Clasp thee for our own!

GOD'S MESSENGER

FROM heaven there came unto me
A messenger one summer day.
Our Father, who sent her to me,
Had made her as fair as could be,

And said, "I but lend her to thee,
I lend her, to take her away."

My husband looked on us and smiled,
As close in my bosom she lay,
And said, "I thank God for this child,
This beautiful, fair little child."
Then thro' me there rushed a thought, wild,
That she must soon leave us for aye.

I don't know what made me think so,—
But oft, amid anguish and pain,
Comes a spirit of prophecy — so
I think angels made me to know,
And warned me, our darling would go
Unsullied to them again.

She lingered a day — only one,
And Memory rings in my ears,—
The wail of that dear little one
We hid from the flowers and sun
And tried to say, "Thy Will be done,"
'Mid passionate, grief-laden tears.

I had been so wicked, I know
This dear little baby came here
As pure as the white, driven snow,
To tear with deep sorrow and woe
This heart, and in dust to lay low
My spirit, with trembling and fear.

'Tis said, when a little child dies
A golden cord rests in its hand;
And with this straight up to the skies
It flies, and it forms, as it flies,
A passway on which we may rise,
At last, to the Heavenly Land.

IN MEMORIAM *

THE sunrise was bright far over the earth,
The church-bells rang their sweetest chime,
All nature put on her mantle of mirth,
Which she wore in the olden time.

The wild birds whistled their merriest song
In the dark magnolia trees,
And gladness itself seemed floating along
On every passing breeze.

The river in grandeur proudly roll'd on
To the chanting of mimic waves;
Nor whisper of mortals was upward borne,
Who found in its depths only graves.

The children's glad hearts were like the young rose,
Or ever its petals are blown;
They knew not, nor dreamed, a terrible close
Could follow so happy a morn.

One beautiful boy ran close to the stream,
With joy in his step and his face —
When lo! the waters send back a wild scream —
Then suddenly close o'er the place.

The treacherous bank had crumbled away
And carried that fair boy down —
Oh! the lightest spirit was saddened that day,
And trembled with fear in that town.

* "Little Robbie Swearingen," who was drowned in the Mississippi River at Grand Gulf, Miss., by the caving of the bank, May 31, 1856.

They searched the deep river for many a day,
And thro' many a weary night;
But waves enshrouded that beautiful clay
And hid it forever from sight.

Long years have awakened, and faded and died,
Since that child sank under the wave —
The river rolls on, in its grandeur and pride,
As when it first made him a grave.

But mothers clasp close their little ones yet
With a trembling awe in the heart,
While tears of sympathy, tears of regret,
In their eyes unbidden will start,

Whenever they tell the story of him
So suddenly taken away —
Gone down where the river his requiem
Eternally chants on its way.

Ah! merry the hearts its broad bosom bears
Unmindful of those in death's sleep,
Who once were the center of hopes and of fears,—
But oh! they rest well in the deep.

Tho' loving ones here can never know where
His little form lies in the sand,
When God shall make up His bright jewels, *there*
Dear Robbie among them will stand.

AN INCIDENT OF THE WAR

"Now brace your hearts!"—thus the low words
came
From lips of a beardless boy,
"You are not playing an idle game,
Nor is that gun but a toy.

“Don’t speak a word, for a little lack
Of talk may do us some good.
You know a shot in a soldier’s back
Sometimes is not understood.

“Perhaps behind us a riding scout
Is seeking a place to camp.
They’ll soon be posting their pickets out,—
I think I can hear their tramp.

“You are but ten, and tho’ I’m sixteen,
I’ve fever from sole to crown:—
But what of that, if we can stand between
This raid and the sleeping town!

“Only two boys! Oh, for fifty men!
Just fifty, with us to-night;
We’d show these impudent raiders, then,
A braver and bolder fight.

“What if we die ere the wane of night;—
The Father, with sleepless eye,
Will not forget, in the realms of light,
We dared for the South to—die.

“Who is that, John? A Yankee? Well,
For him I will do my best.”
A sharp report, and the picket fell,
A rifle ball in his breast.

“You shot too quick! But load up your gun,
For others will soon be here,—
There, they are! I’ll take the foremost one,
You aim at him in the rear.”

These whispered words were but scarcely spoke
Ere missiles of death were sped
From boyish hands, with a telling stroke —
And the raiders turned and fled.

The wounded man, by the rotten log,—
Their comrade shot at his post,—
They left to die, like a useless dog,
And forgot their evening's boast:—

The boast to "burn up the village there,
To leave not a brick unturned."
They laughed, while thinking of our despair
At seeing our homesteads burned.

The morning came, and save here and there
A knapsack or sword-belt lay,
We had not known where the raiders were,
Or whither they took their way.

A woman's wit and those stripling boys
Their boasted purpose had marred:
She made them think, when they heard the noise
Of firing, 'twas "Forest's guard."

"What boots it now?" has somebody said,
"They conquered our land at last;
Our brilliant hopes, and fond visions dead —
Are buried with the past:

"What is it now, what our women did,
Or boys who forgot their mimes?"
Ah! something bright for the South lies hid,
Perhaps — in the future times.

DEATH IN PRISON

How often do we murmur, when called to yield we
are
The loving and beloved, when 'round them every
care;
But with utter wretchedness we hear of those who
die
'Mid enemies, in prison, with only strangers by.

Ah! who marked the captive's tear when silently it
fell!
Or who can tell his longing, within his prison cell,
For a free man's step once more the broad, green
earth upon,
Ere life's unanswered yearnings and time for him
were done.

Three years have almost passed since the dreary
month of May
In which my darling brother, in prison, dying lay;
And still, when springtime comes again, with its
balmy breath,
Mournfully doth thought brood o'er that sad, sad
scene of death.

Fearfully the fever raged like lava through each
vein,
And those about him knew he would soon be out of
pain;
But they little heeded it, so callous had they grown —
Oh, God! that human hearts should become as
hard as stone!

I would I had been with him, 'twould be such comfort now,
For I have often soothed him when fever burned
his brow,—
If I could not have won him to life and health, I
know
I might have cheered some moments of bitterness
and woe.

Sometimes in delirium his senses seemed to reel,
And he forgot the dreadful war, forgot its piercing
steel,—
Until some sudden movement with agony would
thrill
And wake his mind to reason, without his power or
will.

At length there came a time when he was himself
again,
And memory was busy within his throbbing brain; —
Memory was busy, bringing up before his eyes
Visions of his distant home beneath the Southern
skies.

The thought that its dear inmates, his darling wife
and child,
He might never clasp again had almost made him
wild; —
He could not even leave them a farewell message
there,—
For oh! he was in prison — who would the message
bear?

He thought upon his brother. His eyes were filled
with tears
At mem'ry of their boyhood, those happy, careless
years:

He knew that brother then was upon some tented
field,—
And he prayed that God's right arm would be to
him a shield;

Then as he thought of me he could scarce his sor-
row quell —
I was his only sister, and ever loved him well;
And then my little children to him so very dear —
Oh! 'twas hard indeed to die, when none of us
were near.

His pain seem'd almost gone when hope whispered
to his heart
That some of us might come, ere his spirit should
depart;
He listened for our footsteps, and watched the open-
ing door,
And fancied he heard us upon the outer floor.

"Listen," he said, "that's my wife: I think I heard
her speak.
Go bring her hither quickly, I'm growing faint and
weak.
I'm sure I heard my sister, now I shall soon be well;
To charm away this fever their presence brings a
spell."

Oh! with what bitter anguish he learned we were
not there.
It seems his heart was breaking so great was his
despair.
He murmured o'er our names, then he sadly laid
him down,
So pale, so still he was, as if life itself had flown.

And e'en his enemies, as they looked upon his form,
With pity felt their hearts to the "Rebel soldier"
warm;

That one so young, so noble, should pale and dying
lay,

When those he loved so deeply were all so far
away:

He breathed a fervent prayer unto the Throne of
Grace,

And those who saw him then marked the light upon
his face,—

A light so calm, so holy, that one there held her
breath,

As she gazed upon what was so like a peaceful
death.

There were tears within her eyes,—God bless that
gentle one,

Who thus could feel for him, dying far away from
home.

He was a Southern soldier, she lingered by his side,
And softly closed his eyes when my captive brother
died:

They tell us angels hover o'er every dying bed—
My brother had been praying, and he was com-
forted.

It may be that our mother came unto that stricken
one,

A messenger from heaven, bearing peace unto her
son.

Perhaps she led his spirit to yonder world on high,
Where there are no more prisons, and where they
do not die,

I feel, indeed, my brother those pearly gates went
in,
For faith in Jesus teaches his soul was washed
from sin.

There are some soldier's graves in Nashville's burial
grounds.
They tell me he is resting within one of those
mounds.
They may with idle jesting have laid him 'neath the
sod,
But they could not harm him then — his spirit was
with God:

A holocaust to Freedom how many lives became
Like his, and nations honor our Southern soldier's
name.

They have not died in vain, tho' no monument may
tell

Of how they died, in prison, or how in battle fell.

March 18, 1866.

A PRAYER FOR THE SOUTH

Lo! upon our Southern land
Heavy rests Thy chastening hand.
Every heart is bowed with woe
At the coming of our foe.
Prone upon the dust we lie: —
Father, dost Thou hear our cry?

Streams of patriotic blood
Have been poured forth, like a flood;
And the bones of noble slain
Whiten every battle plain; —
Shall the sacrifice be vain? —
Father, hear our cry of pain!

List the orphans' piteous moan,
Fathers', mothers', bitter groan;
Hark the widows' anguished wail;
Sisters see with sorrow pale: —
"Rachel weeping for her dead,"
Nor will she be comforted.

Rests a shadow o'er the earth; —
Rests a gloom 'round every hearth; —
Must we give them up for naught —
They who have so bravely fought,
Yielding life itself that we
Should possess our liberty?

Oh! with anguish hearts are torn,
And in agony we mourn.
Broken hearts to Thee we bring, —
Wilt Thou take the offering?
"Bruised reed Thou wilt not break,"
Wilt Thou, then, our land forsake?

Thou dost make man's wrath to praise
Thee; and oft his curse doth rise
To a blessing; grant that thus
It shall be so now with us.
Oft mysterious is Thy way —
Father, pity us we pray!

If we had but trusted Thee,
We should now be happy, free.
All our sin, in humbleness,
Unto Thee we do confess.
Look upon our miseries,
Save us from our enemies.

All our deep and guilty pride, —
See, we now have cast aside.

Oh! we trusted not in Thee
For the boon of liberty.—
Hear us in our deep distress,
Take from us this bitterness.

Take away this Northern band
Which now curses our dear land.
Thou dost know their wish of hate
Still our homes to desolate.
Father, unto Thee we kneel,—
Wilt Thou not our sorrow feel?

Sparrows falling to the ground
Have Thy care thrown them around.
More than many sparrows we,—
Let our prayers prevail with Thee.
Thou hast made our land so fair,
Grant Thy blessing and Thy care:

One more heart-felt entreaty
We yet bring most earnestly,—
For him who from Monroe's walls
Daily on Thy great Name calls;—
Free him from that prison drear,
Bless him more each coming year.

Well we know Thou dost chastise
Those whom Thou dost least despise;
And Thy blessing oft doth pour
Rich and deep in darkest hour.
Father, be a friend indeed
To our Davis in his need!

Thou hast said if we would come
In the Name of Thy dear Son,
We should never come in vain,
And Thy mercy we should gain.

Thus before Thy Throne we bow,—
Father, wilt Thou hear us now?

But whatever be Thy will,
Give us strength to bear it still;
Give us faith to turn to Thee
In our joy, and misery:—
Then, at last with open hand
Thou wilt bless "Our Sunny Land."

1865.

CRUMBS

THE lesson which once has been learned
Is never so hard to repeat;
And the lane which once has been turned
Is never so rough to the feet.

Tho' over and over again
We're learning the lesson of life,
There's something we long for, in vain,
'Mid folly, and tumult, and strife.

But why are we never content,
If faith in our bosoms we keep?
Though false with the true may be blent,
'Tis better to smile than to weep.

Each day we may gather some bliss,
Which close to our hearts we may bind;
To make us courageous in this—
While waiting the next life to find.

Each day has its shadow and shine,
Tho' mingled with tempest and rain;
Each evening must surely decline,
The night with its rest come again.

Each footstep we make in the snow
Is weary, and chilling, my dear;
But nearer, the valley below
Is smiling, our spirits to cheer.

And under the snow 'neath our feet
May dormant lie some little seed,
To spring up all lovely and sweet,
Because of a step it hath need.

There's many a gladness we lose,
Which love to our clasping has led —
Because we reach farther and choose
To grasp at a shadow instead.

Then do not be gloomy, nor sad,
Whatever our lives have in store;
We cannot unmix good and bad
Till rested upon the bright shore.

I know there are times when the heart
Is yearning for something above,
All joy which on earth hath a part,
All peace which is gathered from love.

I know 'tis but symbol and sign
Of what we shall hereafter be —
My spirit but asks the Divine
One boon: — To be folded with thee.

Then do not be gloomy, nor sad,
But let us walk steadily, friend;
And look up, our bosoms made glad,
With cheerfulness unto the end.

SHADOWS

For the struggle will soon be over.—DR. TALMAGE.

'Tis pitiful, sometimes, truly,
Tho' hearts be patient and strong,
To know them breaking surely,
Beneath a burden of wrong.

'Tis pitiful, destiny leads where
The good, the loving, the best,
Must grapple with terrible needs, there —
Which leave few moments for rest.

I question with fate, and wonder
If somewhere, after this life,
The soul grown purer and fonder
Shall be more blest for the strife?

If pathways pressed by the weary
Will gleam with verdure and bloom?
And hopes from a sad misere
Will spring to drive away gloom?

For bright is the day whose gloaming
Beams fair with forthcoming light,
Swift rolling the waves whose foaming
Cast sparkles of fire at night.

“The struggle will soon be over,”—
With toil, and sorrow and pain;
The weary shall rest forever,
The spirit be free again.

BEND LOW, O GOD!

"The medical profession knows no remedy for it; at least, I know none."—DR. CHAPPIN, during the prevalence of yellow fever in 1878.

O, God! upon our South bend low
And from Thy mercy seat let flow
The words of healing, ere the scourge
Sweep all before its onward surge.

Bend low, bend pitying low, our God!
Have we not sorrow's wine-press trod?
Why should we thus so vainly cry,—
Forsaken;—in such agony?

The Fever fiend is still abroad,
Still gathering victims horde on horde:—
To Thee at last, Great God, we bow,
And wail our miserere now.

Lo! men gaze in each other's face,
In quailing dread of fever trace;
And turning, fly. Some, mad with fear,
Forgetting even ties most dear.

Some gaze with bated breath—then stay
To do whatever good they may:—
But oh! when these must sink and die
Faith's paralyzed:—Nor dares to cry.

All other hope save Thee is past.
Oh, wilt Thou fail us, at the last?
Bend low to us, and hear our prayer—
Our stricken South some anguish spare.

Hast Thou no mercy for the woe,
From scourge and death, cast to and fro?
Has Thy strong arm grown short and weak?
Come, Father-God, Thy healing speak.

MINOR CHORDS

I've said some bitter things, my child, some bitter
things; and now
I'd take some of them back, at least, if only I knew
how.
But words in anger spoke are gone forever from
our will,
And have their influence, perhaps, when we are
cold and still.

I had good reason too, I think, to hate the Northern
name,
And small to "love this neighbor" boy, until the
Fever came;
And even when I knelt in prayer unto the God of
Heaven,
I could not say, "Forgive me, Lord," for I had not
"forgiven."

But when this desolation spread like wild-fire 'mid
the grass,
They were not slow to help us, so — let all our
hatred pass.
They came with open hearts and hands, like brothers
to their own,
And every gentle sympathy to us have surely shown.

'Tis true, our best and bravest men were slain in
battle, dear,
And thro' the land went woe and death, drove on by
rage and fear;
But wildest passions then were roused, and hid
calm reason's light—
Oh, saddest "honor" ever gained, is won when
brothers fight!

We both were wrong. And now the years have
brought the hour at last,
When we can think with stiller hearts, and say let
strife be past;
It is no little thing with us, to turn with steady
hand,
Intent to fill the yawning gulf 'twixt North and
Southern land.

But in our need they have been kind, and so we
fain would hope
Our gratitude can fill that gulf—so well 'twill
never ope;
Methinks that time may bring the power for much
to be undone,
Of wrong, by both; 'twill surely be a greater vict'ry
won.

Child, I would have yon now forget some lessons I
have taught,
And cast forever from thy soul the cherished venge-
ful thought;
Then if fond prayer a blessing gain for kindly word
and deed,
May Southern hearts for Northern friends with
sure acceptance plead.

December 13, 1878.

A STRANGER'S REQUEST

Joy sometimes makes the human heart
A selfish, worthless thing;
Tho' all must feel affliction's smart,
And pleasures will take wing;
Yet in thy bosom seems to glow
That jewel rich and rare,—
A feeling for another's woe,
A wish to lessen care.

Thy sympathy will fall like balm,
Oft on some wounded breast;
Thy kindly words awhile will calm
Some painful throes to rest;
For often will a little word
Bring an unbidden tear;—
It is the fountain angel stirr'd,
To heal our grieving here.

Thou askest for a gush of song—
Oh, would that it might tell
The earnest feelings pent up long
That in my bosom swell!
Like fabled mermaid's Loralie
From o'er some moon-lit main,
The strains would rise so thrillingly
Thou wouldst not ask again.

A wounded bird will only sing
A plaintive, wailing trill;
Thou canst not, to its carol bring,
The happy notes at will.
Thou askest that I sweep to-day
The chords of joy alone;
But do not chide me if my lay
Should breathe a saddened tone.

'Tis well, when friends around us come,
Our own griefs to disguise;
To cast no shadow over one
Whose friendship we would prize;
To still the surging sea of pain
That o'er our spirit sweeps,
And force the rising tears again
Back to their welling deeps.

But there are sorrows of the soul
We cannot always bow,—
And anguish leaves a written scroll,
Upon the fairest brow:—
A bitter, hollow mockery
A careless lay would be;—
Then let me have thy sympathy,
I cannot sing for thee:

Oh, do not ask me! for my heart
Has felt misfortune's sting,
Which o'er each chord, in spite of art,
A mournfulness would fling,
Like memory of vanished dreams,
Whose brightness passed with them,—
So plaintive and so sad, it seems
A sobbing requiem.

REQUIEM

WHERE the Eastern skies are glowing
Where historic streams are flowing,
Bayard Taylor dies.
Far beyond the waters going
Quickly for a nation's knowing
Flashes this sad news, tho' sowing
Sorrow as it flies.

Toll the solemn, funeral bell,
Cypress twine with immortelle,
For our fallen bard.
Let the saddest requiem swell
In gentlest, sweetest strains to tell
The hearts that loved him — oh, so well!
He is dead. 'Tis hard.

Mourn not we with common sorrow,
Nor from custom anguish borrow
For the nation's loss; —
When for other lives to-morrow
Beameth, is not added yarrow
To the cup, to know the narrow
Grave mocks heaviest cross?

Had his years been full and olden,
Like the wheat-sheaves, ripe and golden,
Reaped in harvest time;
We might feel our hearts embolden,
While with tender memories holden,
Then to know him shroud-enfolden,
After manhood's prime.

But his pulses beat so quickly,
While the fresh bays strewed so thickly
Every step, by every breath.
Hope's fair halo gleamed before him,
Fame's day-star shone brightly o'er him, —
Why has Fate untimely bore him
To the clasp of Death?

Late our hearts were thrilling softly
With his epicedium lofty
Chanting Bryant's knell.
Now we sit with spirits sadder
At the foot of Life's dim ladder,

Whence his soul has mounted, gladder,
To yon heaven so well.

Would we had his muses' power,
O'er his name sweet notes to shower:—
Some fond tribute then,
With tender passion rich and strong,
Would wed his memory to song,
Where votive offerings belong—
'Mid holiest thoughts of men.

APPLES OF SODOM

THE dewdrops glisten on the grass,
The length'ing shadows darker fall,
And I must through the gateway pass
Where soon will be forgotten all.

Stay yet awhile, oh, setting sun!
Thy splendor tempts me still to bask
In foolish dreams, while scarce begun
Before me lies life's meted task.

Stay yet awhile. The golden edge
Of dreams has lost its brightest ray—
I will not linger where the hedge
Of disappointment bars my way.

My soul is weary, and would rest,
E'en while it from oblivion shrink;
But who can tell me what is best?
What shield me, from the unknown brink.

Men chase some "will-o' wisp" to grasp
With eager hand, the frenzied eye
Doth see it wither in their clasp,
Or like a phantom fade and fly.

I've seen triumphant sons of fame
All listless 'neath their laurel wreath;
I've seen the hero's glance grow tame,
And idle swords in rusted sheath;

I've known ennobling hopes of race
Unheeded sink in grim despair;
And manhood's prime and woman's grace
Pass like a breath of Summer air;

I've seen men drink of pleasure's cup,
To taste its bitter lees at last;
And folly's pebbles gather up
While wisdom's treasures glided past;

I've walked with Charity and thought —
By happy hearts we shall be blest: —
But I have found how vainly sought
Is gratitude in human breast.

Is there no place within this life
Where Faith may fold her wings to rest?
Or must the boundless sea of strife
Forever beat against her breast?

Ah! 'neath the sunset's golden glow,
Within me purer thought up-springs,
Like those sweet lily-buds of snow
Whose perfume to the twilight flings.

'Tis duty without recompense, —
If well performed — will soothe the heart;
Of rectitude the conscious sense
Must ever be "the better part."

The will to walk the path which lies
To right, tho' stumbling blocks be great;
To grasp occasion, as it flies,
For word or deed ere 'tis too late.

Then linger yet, oh, fading day!
Evanishing too soon thy light;
And let me labor while I may,
For what is good, for what is right!

I would, before I pass away,
In some life cast my tiny mite,
Which blessedness may bear for aye,
When I have sunk in death's dark night.
1880.

MY "NANNIE"

I BURIED my poor little pet to-day.
" 'Twas sentiment lost," I heard you say.
Well, maybe so;
Only a little she-goat, that's all.
Gentle, and kind, and came at my call,
And loved me so.

Many an hour would lonely have been
But for her presence; and often when
Thro' the deep wood
Strolling I'd go, to read or rest,
She was there too. A friend like the best—
Constant and good.

Bowing her head for tender caress,
Lying upon a fold of my dress,
Ever content;

But to be with me, see me, and hear,
Having such faith she could not have fear,
Whither we went.

“Mischievous?” Yes; but do we not love
Children the more who mischievous prove?
Smiling? Be still.

When I rebuked her, such sad surprise,
Wondering and strange, came into her eyes
It checked my will.

How did I know a soul was not there?
My friend, do you? If so, tell me where
You learned the truth.
Give me no “creed,” nor yet what you think—
Tell what you know; and prove link by link.
Can you, forsooth?

THE STARTLED DEER

(Extract from an unpublished poem.)

A MERRY peal from hunter's horn
Awakes the chase this autumn morn,
While joyous cry of eager hounds
Echoing through the wood resounds,—
For in the forest's quiet deep
The unsuspecting deer asleep
Lies, till he hears the distant cry
Of hounds, as on his track they fly.

He wakens with a graceful spring,—
With head erect he's listening;
With angry snort he turns him round,
He sniffs air, he paws the ground,

A moment more he seems to know
Which way doth come his mortal foe.
Then with long, sweeping graceful bounds
He soon leaves far the yelping hounds.

Away! away! he well hath need,
Swift-footed though he be, of speed.
Retracing, crossing, o'er and o'er,
The steps he just had made before.
It matters not to him, I ween,
If fallen trees or deep ravine,
Or rocks or rushing waterfall,
Lie in his path—he clears them all
With lightning speed, until at last
He finds he is all danger past.

A SIMILE

THE children we have fondly nursed
Will turn away from our embrace,
And each will find some newer life
In which we have nor part nor place;

And so the young birds leave the nest
To seek some unfamiliar sky,
Forgetful of their parents' care
When wings grow strong enough to fly.

AN IDYLL

MAN knows no purer joy than when
He looks upon his second self,
With triumph in the glowing thought:
“This is my child; my own new life”
He feels new vigor from this bliss,—

If death will leave his gem alone,
Until some freak, or whim, or fate
Gaps separation far and wide—
Which is but death, set round with bounds.
But thornless roses do not grow,
And he who would the sweet inhale
Must risk the poignant sting as well.

Our lives lie far apart,
And land and sea between us smile;
Yet often times my throbbing heart
Thrills lovingly with thoughts of you,
My own fair girls.

Oh! there are times,
When 'mid the strangers gathered round,
If joy or sorrow touch my soul
Each fiber of my being yearns
To have your quick, sweet sympathy;
When all the mother's tenderness
O'erflows the duties of the hour,
And longs to have your presence near,
To feel that ye are mine again—
Mine as of old.

I'm selfish then,—I know it well,—
But is deep love e'er otherwise?
The quivering string whose fuller tones
O'erleaps all other notes sometimes
Is more enduring than the rest:
What though its tension be so great
'Twill tremble to the lightest breath
Of zephyrs, if these wander from
The homes of kindred symphonies!

I did not have
The blessing of my mother's care;
Or if I had, 'twas angel hands
That led and shielded girlhood's steps;
And memory holds faint glimpses now
Of a sweet face which bent o'er me
In infancy, with tender eyes:—
God knows with what a yearning cry
My soul has called for mother love
In some intensest hour!
And this deep longing in my life
Has made me tenderer to you,—

More thoughtful of your childhood's joys,—
More loving of your womanhood.
Ofttimes I have awaked from sleep
And, bending o'er your quiet forms
In some false fear—nameless and fond—
I've watched your peaceful slumbering;
And when your gentle breathing told
My foolish heart that "all was well,"
I've softly laid my cheek upon
Your placid brows and kissed the lids
Which folded in your sweet blue eyes,
As lightly as a rose-leaf falls.
But heavy-laden was each kiss
With all the wealth of tenderness.

Yet think not I would bar you from
The happy lot of womankind,—
To love, and be beloved; to know
The fullness of that priceless joy—
The blessedness of wedded love:
And more than this, it moves my soul
To know your wedded lives are blest,
And ye have joined the motherhood.
Look in the blue depths of the eyes

Of those sweet babes, and then ye'll know
How earnest is your mother's love.

In future years, perhaps, will come
The trial to your souls as well—
To see your children turn away
From your fond, sheltering tender care,
With willing feet and happy hearts,
To some new home, untried, unproved,—
Nor mindful that your smiles but hide
The loneliness within your breasts.
Then let your thoughts fly back to me,
And quelling mournful impulses
Be patient then. Be strong! be kind!

Pray God to spare you to your babes,
Until they pass the outer gate,
To seek some other home than yours,—
Aye, more! ye will be truly blest
If ye may tarry to caress
Your darlings when the time shall come
For sorrow's sad baptismal rite.
'Twill surely come;—it comes to all.
Since Eden's flower-strewn paths were trod
No more by feet of human kind,
No voice can soothe like mother-tones.
And woe's sharp pang, in riper years,
Wakes the same deep, passionate cry
As pain doth wring from infant lips.

I know the subtle cord that binds
Your gentle hearts to me is strong;
I feel it quiver when ye weep,
And ring with music for your joy,
My darling ones. But ye are far,
Far from my loving arms to-night.
I sit and close my eyes, and dream

Of voice and face, and almost hear
Your footsteps at the opening door.—
'Tis but a dream. God bless my girls! —
Yea, more than fondest prayer can ask.

FOR ANNIE'S ALBUM

ASK me not to write for thee
Newer thoughts than others here,
Neither hopes nor wishes dear
In life's passing still may be
Ever changeless, and sincere.

Guard the friendships of thy youth —
Others may be thine, in sooth,
Reaching down to age with truth;
Dearest, even then will be,
Of them all, some memory
Now so lightly prized by thee.

FOR KEYSEY

PERHAPS the lines I'm writing here
May be like idle singing,
But well I know in some sad year
Their echo will be ringing.

We all are prone to highly prize —
While yesterdays forgetting
The love that fain would save our eyes
The tears of vain regretting.

The careless days of girlhood fly
With pleasure's pulses beating,
And hearts like mine suppress a sigh
That these should be so fleeting.

And yet I would not have you grow
Less hopeful and believing,
The time may come when you must know
The artful and deceiving.

Then take from life all joy you may,
Nor doubt the sun to-morrow,
Some blessing thus will come each day
E'en in the midst of sorrow.

TO MY BROTHER

I would not that one silver hair
Should glisten 'mid those locks of thine;
Nor that thy life should have a care,
If more than wishing could be mine:
But all our longings—more or less—
Are empty promptings of the heart;—
We know too well their nothingness,
Because they leave so keen a smart.

The vainest things of vanities
These silent yearnings ever are;
They bring new tear-drops to our eyes,
And do not drive away despair;
They open wide the yawning grave,
Where buried lie bright golden hopes,
And do not point away to save
Our future from such dangerous slopes.

In looking back, perhaps we see
How much of good we might have done,
But what our future lives shall be
Is known but to Our God alone;
And if we stop to wish and yearn
For blessings bright denied us here,
We may that mercy from us turn
Whose wings perhaps were hovering near.

My brother, all save you and I
Of our dear household band are gone;
And oft my heart's strong yearning cry
Is that you leave me not alone.
I fain would, once more ere I die,
Enfold thee in a close embrace;
I fain would mark with loving eye
Time's signet on thy darling face.

The changing years since we have met
Have left their traces on us all;
And I, whose star of hope has set,
Would not their passing now recall;
I pray the coming time shall yet
Bring still more blessedness for thee,
That o'er thy path no vain regret
Shall fall like shade of upas tree.

And now farewell, for soon I go
Where prairies stretch 'neath Western skies;
But from my heart to thee shall flow
A tide of loving memories:—
Swift sweeping up, from childhood's years,
The billows crested with our love,
While Faith's bright rainbow, flashed from tears,
Will promise we shall meet above.

LINES

THEY painted the features fairly
With palette and pencil and brush,
And sought on the canvas to fasten
The tints of the life-glowing flush;
But I miss the sound of their voices,
From the lips forever ahush,
And the eyes have never a sparkle,
Whence flashes of thought ought to rush.

Familiar, — and yet they look strangely,
These pictures that come to me now;
They're wanting the changeful expression
Which played over cheek, lip, and brow.

I've longed in the anguish of spirit
For only one look at each face;
My brothers, so tender and loving,
I would I could once more embrace.
But cold in the gloom of the coffin,
Whence none can life's pathway retrace,
They're lone and silent forever,
With motionless, upturned face.

And pictures, tho' bringing some comfort,
Can never their presence replace;
And years in the cycles are sweeping
Many hopes, many yearnings, apace.

Each bearing its joy and its burden,
Each leaving indelible trace,—
Yet bringing my spirit no answer
From out the invisible space.
I cannot quite fathom the feeling
Which moves me, so subtle it is,—

I know that my heart often quivers
To its depths, 'neath strange mysteries.

Oh! the passionate, aching longing
To live again sweet golden years,
When the ghosts of the Past come thronging,
With laughter, and song—even tears,
And Memory gathers a halo
As each from the silence appears.

I wish I could tell you, dear brothers,
Wherever your spirits have flown,
That I whom you cherished so fondly,
And left 'mid earth's trials alone,
Have gathered life's threads for another,
Whose large heart deep sorrow had known,
And woven them into contentment
The while I gained peace for my own.

I fain would be with you, and hear you,
Wherever you may be,—and yet,
Without him who lifted life's shadows
My spirit would droop with regret.
I feel it will glad you, dear brothers,
Tho' bright your existence and sweet,
To know while in life I am walking
The pathway is smoothed for my feet.

I look at these pictures and gather
A vision almost of your home;
And often your eyes are turned earthward—
Be patient, I surely will come.
And then ye will gather around me
With welcome and tenderest care,
And thoughts of this long separation
Will vanish forever from there.

MIGNONETTE

I WALKED in a stranger's garden
 'Mid flowers low and tall,
And one in a little corner
 Seemed sweeter than them all.

'Twas not for the flaunting brightness
 Of the crimson blossoms there,
Nor yet for the waxen whiteness
 Of exotic lilies rare;
'Twas not for the jasmine's perfume,
 In delicate subtile flow,
Nor yet for the opening promise
 Of the bright red roses glow;
'Twas not for the golden splendor,
 Entangled amid the leaves,
Nor yet for the tints of purple
 A bud from the cloud receives;
'Twas not for the sunshine glancing,
 With bee or butterfly's wing,
From out the bosom of flowers,
 Where the tiny fairies sing;—
Nor yet for the zephyr dancing
 That my heart was quivering.

But down in a little corner
 Was a mignonette abloom,
Which set my heart a-thrilling
 With its delicate perfume.
And Memory's pictures glowing
 Were hung upon her wall,
And the light of love was flowing
 From out the past o'er all.

And one more bright than another,—
How strangely vivid it seemed! —
The face of my soldier brother,
Where the setting sunlight gleamed;
And that of a fair young maiden,
Aglow with the tints of love,
As pure as that of the angels
'Mid the white-winged hosts above.

They stood in my own fair garden,
And he plucked a mignonette,
And said, "Should I fall in battle,
My darling, do not forget."

Oh, phantoms bright and tender,
In lifelike loveliness,
The quick hot tears engender,
To stifle the heart's caress.

The shadows grow nearer, nearer,
And all the pictures are gone,
Save this one, so much the dearer,
It's lingering all alone.
For grass and flowers are growing
Between their faces and mine,—
Shall I see their beauty glowing
Where glories eternal shine?

YEARNINGS

I WOULD be to thee
Far more than thou hast ever known —
A joy, a blessing, which shall grow
More deep, more prized, as years shall pass.
Yet ever new, I fain would wake

Sweet symphonies within thy soul,
That ne'er till now were waked, and fling
A thrilling echo to the gates
Through which none pass and e'er return.
So that, when thou shalt enter there
And listen to that echo,—thou
Shalt feel the blessedness of home,
And love, and happiness, that I
Have shared and given thee on earth.—
Shall it be so?

I fain would be the hills,
Within thy life, that shall reflect
The softest, brightest sunshine; which
Give token of cool, shadowy vales,
Where love and hope together dwell
Content.—I would my faults would be
But drifting clouds, whose lining shows
The golden gleam, with fervent glow,
That brightens till in warm-hued mist
They melt at last.—Oh! I would be
All, all thy heart hath ever craved,—
Thy soul hath missed in life, or yearned
To find, when time shall be forgot.
I'd merge my being into thine,
Yet be myself as part of thee
Through ages which cannot be told—
Existence' fair fruition.

My own,
Hast thou e'er known idolatry,—
The sweet enslaving of the soul
That holds naught back from love?
Then thou canst know sometime, perhaps,
How deep, how grand, this worship is!
I know how priestly lore would chide,
Yet care not I for creeds that teach
And torture faith for selfish end.

Is nature ever perfect grown
Until each molecule finds its mate?
And say we not each planet moves
By influence of some bright sun?—
Then, is it sin for human soul
To know and claim its own in life,—
When through the long Eternity
'Twould dwarf and wither were it still
To wander missing that dear twin?
Ah, darling! Would yon heaven be
So longed and sought for, if on earth
Our spirits did not sometimes know
The foretaste of supernal bliss,
Which stills the soul's impatient cry
For perfect love, in perfect peace?—
Would Eden loom so fair for us
If we had missed each other here?

A SOUVENIR

HAD I the power of Runic sage,
To tell thee of to-morrow,
I would not trace on this fair page
For thee a single sorrow;
Or, had I wand of fairy queen,
I'd make thy life all brightness;
Nor should a shadow intervene
To dim thy spirit's lightness.

But I can only wish for thee
A life of peaceful pleasure,—
More precious far, it seems to me,
Than Ophir's shining treasure.
And if thy sun may sometimes shroud
His face, let not repining
Fill thy young heart; the darkest cloud
Has yet the brightest lining.

WINTER RAIN

Gloomy, dreary, and dull
The day drags wearily on;
The clouds are heavy and full
The rain is pattering down.
With never a gleam of sunshine bright
From cheerless morn to darksome night.

Dripping, dripping, and drip,
From eaves o'er the swallows' nest,
And with a fretful lip
We tell the children "'tis best."
Yet sigh for wind, with its angry moan,
To break this sullen monotone.

Sweeping across the sky,
And driving the lazy rain;
Soughing, as if to die,
In a mournful, low refrain,—
While hurrying clouds thro' broken rifts
Would scatter sunlight's golden drifts.

Watching the falling rain,
I stand by the window-sill;
Till feelings akin to pain
Come into my heart and fill,
With pity for houseless, homeless ones
Who must sleep to-night on cold, wet stones.

Turning, within I see
My home so cosy and warm;
Marveling this should be,
So many must brave the storm:—
I chide my heart for its discontent,
Where pleasure and pain are strangely blent.

Sinking at last to rest,
Unseen, the bright red sun,
With scarce a ray in the west,
To tell us the day is done.—
I close the door on the darkening night
With peaceful joy in our warmth and light.

TIT FOR TAT

You left me in chilly December,
'Twas just before Christmas, you know,
And you said, "Now, darling, remember,
I'll come back when June roses blow."

You said that this "absence so grieved you,"
You scarce could say "Good-bye," forsooth;
And I, like a woman, believed you,
And deemed every word of it truth.

The tears to my eyes that were starting,
I held in their fountains unshed;
I tried to be cheerful at parting,
And give you bright smiles in their stead.

Your truth and your love you were vaunting,
You begged me to "try them and prove."
I did so,—and found sadly wanting
This wonderful thing of man's love.

I wonder why woman will measure
Man's heart by the depth of her own,
To find out, at last, that her treasure
Is dust and her "idols are stone."

The June roses blossomed and faded,—
I still thought you surely would come;—
And oft in my dark hair I braided
Their rich buds to welcome you home.

But what is the use of this prating?
Neglect has made some women wise.
For you I'm not "sadly waiting,"
This morceau of news will surprise.

Next week I have promised to marry
A man — not a saint, so you see,
As long as you choose you may tarry,—
Your coming is nothing to me.

TO XARIFFA

(On reading her poem of "Our Own.")

I WOULD I knew thee as thou art,
For thou hast touched the chords
That tremble round my loving heart
By those few, simple words.
'Tis strange sometimes the spirit-cries
From bosoms yet unknown
Awaken sweetest melodies
Responsive — in "our own."

I have been thinking, sadly too,
Of those dear friends to-day,
Whom other years I loved and knew —
But oh! where, where are they?
How many of them even now
From earthly scenes have flown?
And sadness gathers on my brow
With thoughts of these — "our own."

While some have at the altar knelt
In blest, requited love,
The deepest woe have others felt,
Or e'er they walked above.
And some there were whom little we
Thought would have faithless grown,—
Have made us sigh that there could be
A Judas 'midst "our own."

I have been gazing gratefully
Upon my elder child,
And then have met most tenderly
My infant's blue eyes mild.
And tho' the loved of other days
O'er this wide world are strewn,
My heart is full of humble praise,—
Oh, God! for these—"our own."

Where'er on earth our lot be cast,
If life be smiles or tears;
If scattered by misfortune's blast
The wealth and hopes of years;
Or granted every wish and will
Our hearts have ever known;—
There will be always something still
We'll love to call "our own."

TO MISS NELLIE GRIFFITH OF BALTIMORE

(With a Book.)

I WOULD, in bidding thee good-bye,
That I could wake a strain
Which thou wouldst think of tenderly
And wish it o'er again.

But oh! my heart's too full of grief,
My eyes of unshed tears,—
I mourn this parting, sad and brief,
We may not meet for years.

I would not be forgotten quite —
(Thus often think I sing)—
Thou couldst not thus so ill requite
My full heart's offering.

Then take this simple souvenir,
'Tis friendship's gift to thee,
And sometimes in each future year
Think lovingly of me.

1861.

ACROSTIC

MAY friendship send a wish for thee
Adown thy future years,
Regretting that the wish should be
Incompetent to turn from thee
A single gush of tears.

E'en tho' thy heart may soon forget,
Like others have before,
I'd wish thee joy and pleasure yet
So much, thou wouldst not know regret,
And thou shouldst reach fourscore.
But fairest thought so vainly ends,
Ere age shall touch thy brow,
Thou mayst not care, midst other friends,
How prized this feeling now.

Hope's earnest prayer is ne'er in vain,
And rising from my heart
The spirit-breathing low refrain
Can save thy breast, perchance, some pain,
However blest thou art.

TO MISS SYKES

(Written in my sixteenth year.)

THINK of me when thou art alone
And memory turns to other days,
When hushed is every lover's tone,
And silent every flatterer's praise —
Then, Marcella, think of me.

Think of me when the golden sun
Has gone behind the trees to rest;
When each day-bird its song hath sung
And sought again its leafy nest,—
Then, Marcella, think of me.

Think of me when the fair, young moon
Comes out in modesty and grace,
And bright stars form a glad festoon
Round her and smile on thy sweet face —
Then, Marcella, think of me.

Think of me when the morning's blush
Shall chase the gloomy night away,
And the orient sky shall flush
With the advancing light of day —
Then, Marcella, think of me.

Think of me when thou art kneeling,
And a prayer to God art breathing,
In thy young heart's purest feeling;
Think of her thou now art leaving —
Then, dear, sweet friend, think of me.

A TRIBUTE

(To my dearest friend, Marcella, written in her album the evening of her marriage.)

MAY'ST thou be happy! May thy life
Be with holiest pleasures rife.
May'st thou rarely know a sorrow,—
Brighter beam thine every morrow:—
Whilst thy spirit rests as gently,
As sweetly calm and silently,
As an infant's peaceful slumber
Watched by angels without number.

May'st thou be happy. May *he* prove
Most worthy of thy deepest love.
May his affection never wake
Thy need of this thou dost forsake.
And should thy spirit be the first
To wing its way whence came it erst—
Oh! may *he* catch thy latest breath,—
Thy star through life, thy friend in death.

April, 1851.

AN AUTOGRAPH

(For our daughter "Chess.")

FRIEND after friend will turn these leaves,
Some with fond hearts, some carelessly,
And thus each page a line receives,—
What tho' sincere or thoughtlessly.

But years sweep by, and those who write
Forget sometimes the tenderness
Which could such loving words indite.
Have you not found it so, dear Chess?

Our human hearts palimpsests are.
'Tis better so, or memory
Of disappointment, pain, and care
Would strangle hope remorsefully.

Now, if I may one thought impress,
Which shall not fade when you read this,
'Tis that you know me sincere, Chess,
When here I wish you every bliss.

I fain another thought would speak —
'Tis this, keep thou the talisman,
Content and peace, through spring-tide week —
They'll brighten autumn's cyclamen.

And if you travel down the path
Of circling years to winter's snow,
This twain will yield an aftermath
In which no thorn or thistles grow.

Forgive these thoughts, if they should seem
Less kind than others, well you know
Affectionate I'd have you deem
The words of one who loves you so.

TO "MARGARET"

AROUND a little curl of hair,
Sent long ago, these numbers twine;
While I am strangely curious where
The sister tresses softly shine.

They may be streaked with gray, perhaps,
And beautiful may still remain,
For time has had a weary lapse
Of wintry wind and April rain.

I wonder if the brow this wreathed
E'er throbs with pleasant thoughts of one
Who in sweet song so fondly breathed
Request for it in that by-gone.

Or have the intervening years
Left in thy mem'ry little trace,
'Mid sterner duties, smiles, and tears,
Of manly form, or name, or face?

I think no jealousy doth fill
The measure of my little lay —
A sympathetic chord may thrill,
Of what the "might-have-been," to-day.

Life's written pages backward read
Will place thee as betrothed bride
Of one who long has been as dead
To thee, and *I* am by his side.

Think not he idly sought the gift,
Nor prized but simply to obtain;
The sun may find no friendly rift
In clouds surcharged with chilling rain.

And I have seen him softly smile,
With gentle thought of thee, and this;
And heard him speak thy praise, the while
He pressed my brow with loving kiss.

I envy not his love of thee,
Nor memories of that youthful time.
That which he proudly gives to me
Is won, and held from manhood's prime.

And in the gloaming oft we sit,
Recounting scenes of youthful days,

When life was with a glamour lit
And shrouded in a dream-world haze.

'Tis then he sometimes speaks of thee
And other friends in kind regret,
I draw from this sweet augury
Time cannot make his heart forget.

But hush! In lonely silentness
The sister curls may long have lain.
I'll fold away this little tress
Forever in its place again.

TO MISS LUCY RILEY

If on this fair white page I write
But auguries of good for thee.
I would affection's hopes indite
Instead of truthful prophecy:
If I could look beyond the pale
Which bounds the shadowy To-Be,
I would, unconscious, from thee veil
Whatever there would sadden thee.

But if it be 'mong poet's gifts
To make thy young heart still more gay,
'Twere sweet to show where golden rifts
Let brightest sunshine fall to-day;
E'en though where Hope her castle lifts,
Awaiting but thy footsteps' play,
Until for thee the Future drifts
Into engulfing yesterday.

Laugh on, in girlhood's careless grace,
Thou hast not known a sorrow yet:—
And distant be the hour thy face
Shall with affliction's tears be wet.

Laugh on, laugh on, nor hesitate
To gather roses whilst ye may —
Yet heed thee lest, insatiate,
Thou gather thorns which 'neath them lay.

I would not dim these happy hours
By visions of Life's darker ones;
Nor mildew now thy gathered flowers,
Nor discords wake 'mid music tones.
But I would shield thee, had I power,
From dangerous will-o'-wisps that lure,
And when the storm-clouds o'er thee lower
I fain would know thy rescue sure.

I love to see thee ever glad,
I love to hear thy laughter ring; —
And yet it almost makes me sad,
Sometimes, to hear thy sweet lips sing,—
Because I know life's harsher strings
Will answer to thy future touch,
And time at last with gloomy wings
Will shade thy spirit overmuch.

May sweetest echoes then return
From youth as 'twere but yesterday,
And memory's holy incense burn
To cheer thee on thy darkened way,—
Till glimpses of the bright Beyond,
With dazzling, incandescent ray,
Shall guide thee where at last is found
A fadeless, blissful peace for aye.

TO LUCY

(Acrostic.)

LET all thy years unfolded yet
Unite to bring thee joy,
Contain of sorrow or regret,—
Youth's whims the sole alloy.

Revealed along these coming years,
In fancy's picture dwell;
Love's traces of its hopes and fears,
E'en tho' it give small room for tears,
Yet God doth all things well.

LINES TO SIDNEY SKINNER

WHAT shall I say, dear Sidney,
Of studied word or chance
That on some day, dear Sidney,
May catch your passing glance,—
And cause a kindly feeling
To awaken in your heart,
As memory o'er it stealing
Will give me some small part?

You do not want a sermon —
Still less you wish a song.
The first is all too common,
The last may prove too long.
We cannot rule a measure
For undiscovered land,
Nor mark the paths of pleasure,
Nor rocks, nor beds of sand.

Life lies untried before you,
To mould it as you will;
And time will not ignore you —
Or spend it well or ill.
Some moments come surpassing
All others, for your clasp: —
Take heed to know their passing,
And each occasion grasp.

If true ambition woo you
To walk where others fail;
Let not their faults undo you,
Nor wavering fears prevail.
We all have hours of sadness,
Discouraged for the right,
But bright are days of gladness
Enransomed from the night.

So nerve your heart, dear Sidney,
To win the goal at last;
And act your part well, Sidney,
Ere time for you be past;
Regrets will not avail you
When youth's mistakes you scan,
Nor manhood prove a failure,
If lived the best you can.

AFRAID

Your prisoned bird will beat his wings,
However tender be your care;
And when he folds them up and sings,
'Tis but the wild song of despair.
He may become resigned at last
To dwell within those cruel bars,—
Think not he has forgot the past,
For heart and wing retain their scars.

Your petted fawn may check his speed
In answer to your fond recall,
But still his heart hath other need
Than your caressing, after all.
And tho' his prison be a park
A-bloom with nature's loveliness,
He yet longs for the forest dark,
And freedom in the wilderness.

And so were I to take your name
And heart in answer to your plea,—
Tho' you should prove to be the same
In after years as now to me,—
I fear, like prisoned fawn and bird,
I might look backward with regret:—
I own my heart is strangely stirred,
But dare not yield my freedom yet.

MORNING-GLORIES

FRAGRANT, fleeting morning-glory,
Poets rarely sing your beauty;
When they do, they tell your story
Less from love than fancied duty.

But I love your brilliant tinting,
Rainbow-hued, with cloud land splendor,
And your perfume faint and glinting,
Incense like when hearts are tender.

White and blue, with crimson tracing,
Lilac, violet, and rosy —
Vines with curvings interlacing
Show me many a royal posy,

For the bright Aurora's greeting
Every cup with nectar dew — wine —
So their use and beauty fleeting
Fade they with the morn, in sunshine.

'Mid the long forgotten stories
Of the ancients, was a nation
Which (so like these morning-glories)
Gave the morn its best libation.

And the spirit of these stories
Falls upon me, soft and tender,
As I pluck my morning-glories
In their fragrant, fleeting splendor.

A VALENTINE

WHEN rivers shall no longer flow
Forever onward to the sea;
When moments shall no longer go
From out our lives eternally;
When Love and Hope shall cease to be
The prophets of futurity,
And suns shall cease in heaven to shine —
I'll then forget thee, Valentine.

And whether sunset embers flash
A blushing farewell to the day,
Or gathering clouds air-castles dash
To gloomy dullness of decay,
Till you and I shall quiet rest
With folded hands o'er pulseless breast —
Till then I'll worship at thy shrine
And think of thee, sweet Valentine.

WEARY

I'm weary, so weary. Would I might rest
As do the dead. Within my quiet breast
No thought, no care, nor ever hounding hurry —
Lest some neglect to-day the morrow worry.

I'm weary, so weary. Why must this life
So oft for woman be a ceaseless strife
With her own heart, to win some fond ambition,
And find too late its hollow, vain fruition?

So weary of waiting. Watching my tide
Creep slowly, slowly up, at last to hide
The shifting sands which so relentless cover
Each builded hope that founded some endeavor.

I'm weary of striving to win the goal
Where One shall say unto my happy soul —
Thou hast done well. Come, rest thy weary fingers
And patient heart where not a sorrow lingers.

I'm weary, so weary of life's mistakes.
Where each new joy of bitterness partakes,
Where eager hands outstretched in tender passion
Are wounded sore by hidden thorns they dash on.

I'm weary of striving to lull the pain
I must endure; of feeling all things vain,
When Fate sets hard against some happy ending;
For reeds must break from constant bruising, bending.

I'm weary of waiting to gain that peace
Which passes human ken,— until release
From earth's deep care and numbing pain is given,
At last, to those who win the longed-for heaven.

S O N G S



MEMORY'S SONG

THERE cometh a bird from the olden time,
Which singeth a song in a golden rhyme,
 In magical notes
 So thrillingly floats
This heavenly lay that it almost seems
A nepenthe balm for our mocking dreams.

'Tis Memory's song, from the long ago,
That floodeth my heart with its music low.
 The faces and tones
 Of dearly loved ones
Who made my life bright in its matin hour
Come back to me now with a silent power.

There cometh a thought of the by-gone days
When life, still untried to my youthful gaze,
 Wore sunshiny hues —
 And beautiful views
Were scattered along in the distance seen,—
A mirage indeed has the vision been.

Now tremble the notes of the after time
When childhood was gone, and womanhood's prime
 An earnestness brought,—
 With a holy thought
To lighten each heart o'er which hung a cloud,
And cover its faults with a mercy shroud.

How vain was the wish! And the quivering strain
With sadness is fraught as I think again
 How misunderstood
 And lonely I stood

The adder was warmed, and its venom'd sting
Sang deep in the heart like a ruthless thing:

Oh, Memory's bird! Oh, come not to sing!
The buried Past from its grave to bring.
 The beautiful lay
 Of life's early day
Has changed to a wail, and a mournful thrill
Is filling my heart as I listen still.

SONG OF THE FLOATING DRIFT

IN and out I am floating away,
 On the bosom of the stream.
The eddies toss me round in their play,
 Till a living thing I seem.
I know not where I shall land at last,
 Nor what my future shall be,—
Perhaps the waves I'm riding so fast
 Will bear me out to the sea.

Palace and cot alike I pass by,
 I heed neither rich nor poor;
Onward forever, like time I fly,
 Like time return nevermore:
Nothing to me the city's vast throng,
 And nothing the wild-wood deep;—
By them I steadily glide along,
 And onward my way I keep.

Nothing to me the dreaded Unknown,
 Not the wearing mental care;
Nothing to me the struggle and moan
 That the human heart-strings tear;

Nothing to me the dying of hope,
Nor the spirit's yearning cry
When it with waves of sorrow must cope,
And it wails despairingly.

Yet Man like me is floating away,
Down the rushing stream of life;
Passion and folly make him their play,
And whirl him on in their strife:—
Passing unheeded the calls of Grace,
Until the deepening stream
Warns him he's near the echoless space
Where time is a bygone dream.
He cannot cheat the billowy waves
E'en a moment of their prey;
They will not grant him the rest he craves,
For the river cannot stay.
He knows not where he will land at last,
Nor what his future shall be,
When the shaded shores of life he's past
And launched in Eternity.

SONG

(*Air*—"Touch, touch again thy light guitar.")

YES, "touch again thy light guitar,"
And sing that low, sweet strain,
It bringeth mem'ries from afar,
And I can weep again.
I live once more those happy years,
A child upon life's stream,
And womanhood's stern cares and tears
Pass from me like a dream.

It 'minds me of my mother's face,
Her gentle, loving tones;
Her form of dignity and grace
Among her little ones.
My spirit hears the lullaby
She used to sing to me,—
It floods my heart so lovingly,
While still I list to thee.

It 'minds me of the happy time
When girlhood's guileless days
Were doubly-winged with song and rhyme,
And passed in dreamy haze.
Then do not cease, but sing again,
That soothing, thrilling song,
I would forget awhile the pain
My heart has borne so long.

FAREWELL

It must be so. It is Fate's will.
And when some future day we meet,
The hearts which now so madly thrill
May tremble then in quiet beat.
Perchance we'll pass each other by
As strangers bent on different ends,
And none may know that thou and I
Have other been than passing friends.

'Tis said that "time makes all things even."
There may be those who find it so.
But there are visions of some heaven
We almost grasp, yet must forego.
I neither blame myself nor thee,—
The human heart brooks small control,—
And rainbow-like thy memory
Will often rise upon my soul.

I count not life the days that make
The sum of our existence here,
I'd rather measure joy we take,
Or sorrow, from each fleeting year.
Are there not moments we may know,
As if by light'ning speed we live,—
So much of bliss, so much of woe,—
For which we would not ages give?

Farewell! Farewell! This cannot be
More bitter to thy soul than mine.
Yet with the word 'twixt thee and me
The glowings of a sunset shine,
And fill my heart with holy peace,
As if nepenthé angel's pour,
For vain regret which may not cease
As yet.—Farewell! Farewell once more!

Farewell! Farewell! The years roll on,
And lonely days pass one by one.
When shall I know my last one gone,
And I with time and grief be done?
Oh! while I linger could I hear
Thee sometimes bid me "All is well,"—
Midst darkest sorrows it would cheer
My fainting spirit. Fare thee well!

IN ANSWER

DEAR, scan my face, for on my brow
Thou well canst mark impress of years;
And, see, upon these features now
Are traces of life's bitter tears.
Dost thou still think as loving wife
I'll fill the void within thy life?

My heart grows fonder at thy call
Than what it ever might have been,
In other years. I give thee all
My wealth of love. Nor tongue, nor pen,
Can to thy spirit well portray
What this deep worship means to-day.

We're growing old,—I know it, dear;
We cannot bid Time's wing be still.
And well I know each passing year
Leaves footprints, though despite our will.
Thou sayest, "Must hearts grow old as well,
Or colder, therefore?" Canst thou tell?

I do not think life's golden time
The guerdon of our youth alone;
For sometimes age's silver rime
Will for the waiting well atone.
And if I could, I'd ever be
All things most good and fair to thee.

I beg thee judge me by thy soul,
Thou wilt be just, I think, to me.
But heap the measure, till the whole
Is overflowing unto thee:
I know that thou wilt find the store
Is still exhaustless evermore.

Art sure thou'lt not regret the time
Is gone, to bring thee youth's fair gift?
Dost truly think in woman's prime
I'm stronger now thy cares to lift?
Well, well, the umbrage of these years
May save us from remorseful tears.

QUESTIONING

Do you think with a gentle devotion
Of me, when fair faces you meet?
Does a glance, or a form, or a motion,
When others who love you you greet,
Make your heart like the shells of the ocean
Keep chanting home memories sweet?

When day over tree-tops is dawning,
Tho' slumbering still you may be,
Do you think that the fairest adorning
Of dreams is some vision of me?
Do you waken and say the new morning
Were brighter if I were with thee?

When the embers of daylight are dying
Mid opaline splendors untold,
And empyrean mountains are lying
In cloudland of purple and gold,—
Do your thoughts to my presence come flying
And softly that presence enfold?

When the shimmer of moonlight is dancing
O'er woodland and water and lea,
Or the glimmer of starlight is glancing
Like fairy from blossom to tree,—
Is the picture to you more entrancing
Because of some fancy of me?

But think not this questioning falling,
Because unto doubt I incline.
Affection so deep and enthralling
Is little less pure than divine:—
'Twould fondly an echo be calling
In answer from your heart to mine.

AFTERMATH

It seems so strange that I should sip
This nector-cup that to my lip
'Tis held with overflowing rim,
And keeps so full, aye, to the brim.

It seems so strange the love so prized
Is mine at last, that realized
At last this dream of mystic joy,—
And peace almost without alloy.

Strange! fateful sisters intertwine
A "human feeling with divine";
Strange! that such chords my spirit sweep
Their very music makes me weep.

Oh, icebergs! floating by the side
Of lands unblest by summer tide,
At last caught by strong undertow,
Which outward to the tropics flow,

Respond to Nature's glowing kiss
And change, in their excess of bliss,
From rocklike forms to leaping waves
Whose crests the brightest glinting saves.

Oh, desert-waste! where living rain
At last doth fall, and bring again
New life to germs which long have lain
Sand-buried on the burning plain,

Awake, and chant æolian tunes.
Perfume and flowers crown their dunes,
And pilgrims dream beneath new trees
Of home, 'mid hum of birds and bees.

But more than these, and deeper still,
The mission which a worm can fill:—
Tho' dead within its darkened cell,
How fair, when burst at last its shell!

And I, like iceberg, felt the change
When this love came, so sweet, so strange.
I yielded to the mystic power
In his dark eyes — e'en from that hour.

And thus, as in a desert place
No flowers glow until his face
Awaked love's blossom sweet and rare,
My very soul lay bleak and bare.

And so, like chrysalis enfurled
Within its shroud from outer world,
I sealed my heart, until the thrill
His presence gave o'erpowered my will.

Ah! every sorrow I have borne,
And every anguish I have known,
Were God-sent angels if their power
Has brought me to this blessed hour.

He loves me — loves me — and a glow
Of golden hues my years o'erflow.
I lay my hand in his. At last
My Aftermath is worth the Past.

CONTENTMENT

Dost ask me why I am so glad,
Whether sunshine, whether rain?
Dost ask me why I am not sad,
If in comfort, if in pain?

I must answer, to your calling,—
Sun and shadow make life fair,
And the rain-drops, falling, falling,
Bring new beauty everywhere.

I, like many a gifted poet,
Whether dumb or singing well,
Love all nature, as I know it,
Even more than I can tell.
Like a poet, loving flowers,
Song of birds, and low of kine,
Much within this world of ours
Glads this simple breast of mine.

Dost ask me why I little heed
Either wealth or sounding name?
Dost ask me if I crave the meed
Others seek from lips of fame?
Let me answer, if I'm singing—
Song is of my soul a part;
And the music in me ringing
Sometimes breaks up from my heart.

DEPRECATIO

If my feet to-night were nearing,
Nearing the unmeasured shore
Where the bravest heart knows fearing,
Tho' it never quailed before;
If my eyes to-night were closing,
Nevermore thy face to see,
And my lips were surely losing
Power to sing or smile for thee;—

Would not, then, some gentle feeling
Cover all my faults away?
While some memory softly stealing
Proved my heart was thine alway?
Wouldst thou not remember, living
I gave thee but tenderness,—
And, remembering, be forgiving
To me, in death's silentness?

Haply I have failed in meeting
All thy soul had yearned for here;—
Thy ideal ne'er completing
As we journeyed year by year.—
If so, when thy farewell greeting
Falls upon unheeding ear,
Do not blame thyself, repeating
Some regret with each new tear.

Do not then upbraid some blindness,
Fancied, in thy waking life;
Thou hast been to me all kindness—
I, thine own devoted wife.
I would have no bitter weeping,
Tho' thou'lt miss me in our home,
Think of me as only sleeping,
Waiting till thy spirit come.

Let this tell thee I have striven
To be all thou mightst have sought,
And I know I'll be forgiven—
(If I failed)—in after-thought.
Life is full of empty yearning,
"Might-have-beens" which haunt and grieve,
And the lesson worth our learning
Is to prize what we receive.

TO THOSE WHO LOVE ME

(Acrostic.)

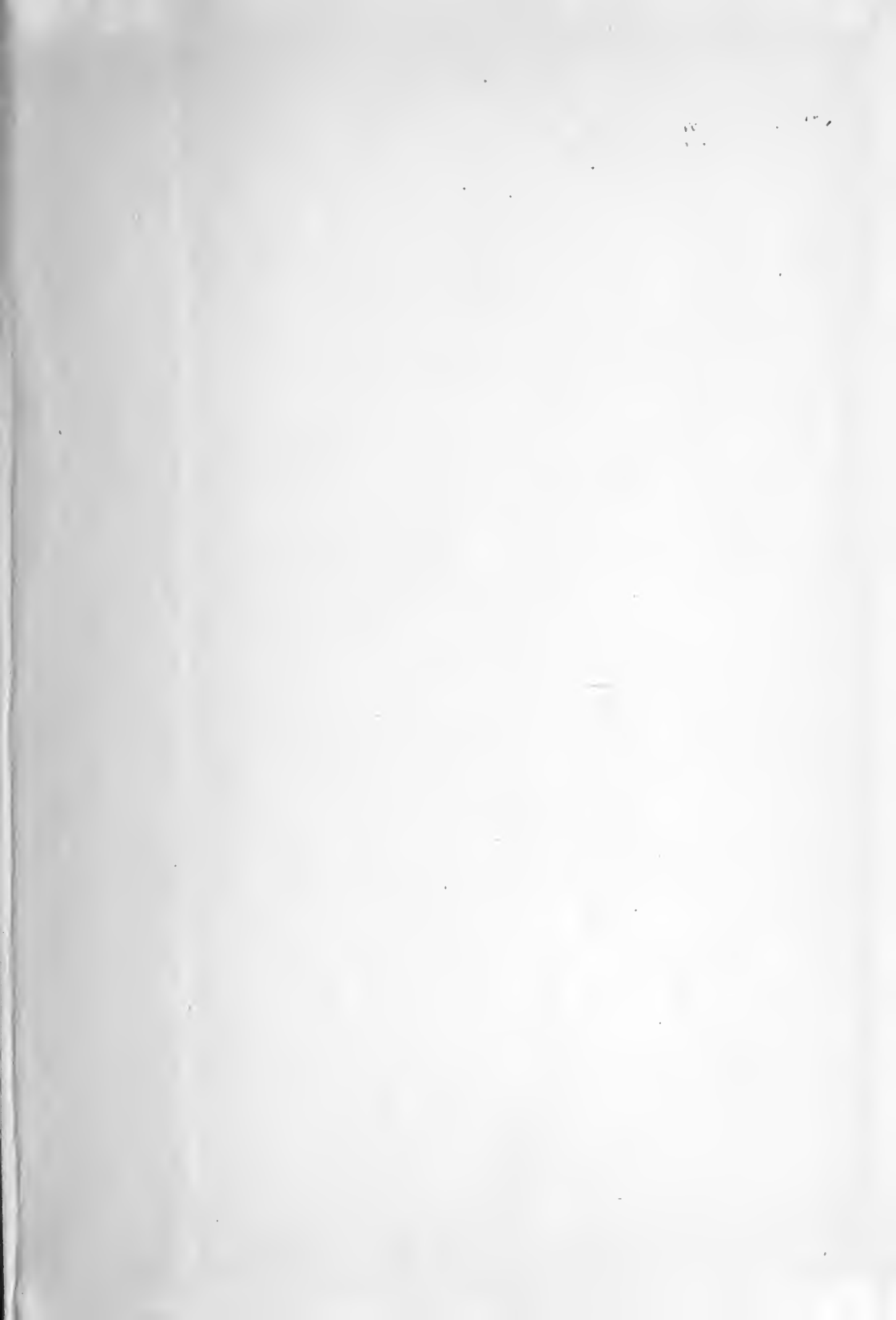
BUT if 'mid kind memories
Ever I shall have a place,—
Touch the gentle melodies,
Tender, low, sweet symphonies,—
Interweave some fancied grace
Even with my cold, dead face.

Keep ye, then, these little rhymes,
Every one with kindness fraught;
You may find in after-times
Even friendship may be bought:—
So, ye'll give me loving thought.

Changing years will come and go,
Hast'ning all things to the end;
As they pass away we know
Many bear from us some friend;
Blessed we, if we may hope,
Eden is our loved one's home:—
Resting, till the gates shall ope,
Swinging wide, for us to come.

THE END

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